



A COMMENTARY
ON THE
BOOK OF JOB

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

Fourteenth Edition. Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d.

SALVATOR MUNDI; or, Is Christ the Saviour of all Men?

Second Edition. 16mo. 1s.

THE LARGER HOPE: A Sequel to "Salvator Mundi."

"We are bound to acknowledge the ability, the richness of textual resource, and the felicity of language and illustration which mark these pages, as they do Mr. Cox's writings generally."—*Guardian*.

"An able and deeply interesting volume, and makes a valuable contribution to the study of the subject."—*Spectator*.

Fourth Edition. Crown 8vo. 6s.

THE GENESIS OF EVIL, and other Sermons. Mainly Expository.

"A more thoughtful or broader utterance of religious thought we have not seen since the day when the voice of him whom many, themselves honoured as teachers, delighted to call 'the Prophet' was hushed in death. There is not one sermon out of the twenty-one which is not full of thought, of suggestion, of subtle exposition, of bold and successful grappling with difficulties."—*Spectator*.

Crown 8vo. 5s.

BALAAM: An Exposition and a Study.

"In its exhaustive collection of data, its sagacious interpretation of records and illusions, and its reconstructive genius, it is, we think, the most satisfactory of all the studies that we possess of this very complex character. The connection with Balaam of the noble passage in Micah vi. 6, *et seq.*, will be new to many. The combination of strong and base passions with great spiritual emotions is one of the component of religious phenomena, and with a strong, skilful hand Dr. Cox dissects the base composite and its impulses."—*British Quarterly Review*.

Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d.

MIRACLES: An Argument and a Challenge.

"This is an able, temperate book. The argument is well stated and well sustained; the challenge is temperately but firmly given. We can commend this little book to all those—and nowadays they are many—interested in the study of Christian apologetics."—*Guardian*.

LONDON: KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER & Co., LT^D.

A COMMENTARY
ON THE
BOOK OF JOB

WITH A TRANSLATION

BY SAMUEL COX, D.D.

LATE EDITOR OF THE "EXPOSITOR"

THIRD EDITION

LONDON
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER & CO., LTD

1894

TO MY WIFE,

WITH MY LOVE.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

THE poets themselves acknowledge *JOB* to be the greatest, or at least one of the greatest, poems ever written; and even the duller reader can hardly be unaware of a certain magnificence both in its theme and style, or fail to cull from it many weighty sentences, many noble and picturesque illustrations. But, with all their admiration of it, even our poets, as one of the greatest of them has confessed, have often failed to catch the argument of the poem, its growing disclosure of spiritual truth; while many of its less gifted readers have not so much as suspected that any argument was being wrought out in the discussion between *Job* and his three Friends. To indicate and emphasize this argument, to shew how it advances from step to step, though its advance be veiled from us under Oriental modes of thought and expression, was my leading aim in writing this Commentary.

I must also plead guilty to the ambition of writing an Exposition which any man of ordinary culture might read, as he reads other books, from end to end, with interest and even with pleasure; and not simply a Commentary to be consulted here or there, now and then. And it often tasked my ingenuity to give all necessary explanations on this passage and that, indirectly and allusively, without constantly bringing the reader to an abrupt halt; and yet so to vary the form in which these necessary explanations were given as to avoid tedious repetitions.

I had still another aim before me, which lay very close to my heart. The Book of *Job* opens and discusses the very problems in which Modern Thought is most concerned; and

furnishes, as I believe, a sovereign antidote to the scepticism which Modern Science has bred, while leading us, however unconsciously, to larger conceptions of truth, and to a more steadfast, because reasonable, faith both in God and in the Word of God. I endeavoured to deal with these problems in a devout and generous spirit, and could not but cherish the hope that those who have been troubled and perplexed by them might here find some aids to faith and answers to doubt, whether their doubts sprang from the too hard and narrow dogmata of Science or of the Church.

In the preface to the First Edition I confessed that these were my aims; and I have now thankfully to acknowledge that—at least in the judgment of many of our most eminent scholars, critics, and men of letters—these aims have in some good measure been attained, and that my work has received a much more generous recognition than I had ventured to expect. In this Second Edition I have been able to do no more than to correct certain obvious errors of the press or of the pen. I would fain have rewritten some parts of the book, if I might and could, and have made considerable additions to other parts. And I am not without hope that the task of a thorough revision may yet be achieved.

In due place I have acknowledged how much I owe to the labours of the scholars who preceded me in this field, and especially to those of Davidson, Delitzsch, Ewald, Renan, and Rodwell. But to Professor A. B. Davidson I owe a special debt, for which I must once more offer him my most grateful thanks. Not only did he invite me to make the freest use of whatever would serve my turn in his own admirable but unfinished Commentary on Job; but, with rare and singular generosity, he placed at my disposal the notes of his Class lectures on Chapters xv.–xxi. An act so gracious speaks for itself, and must be its own best reward.

SAMUEL COX.

CONTENTS.

SECTION	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
I. THE PROLOGUE (Chapters i. and ii.) ...	22
II. THE CURSE (Chapter iii.)	60
III. THE FIRST COLLOQUY (Chapters iv.-xiv.)	73
1. Eliphaz to Job (Chapters iv. and v.)	76
2. Job to Eliphaz (Chapters vi. and vii.)	88
3. Bildad to Job (Chapter viii.)	111
4. Job to Bildad (Chapters ix. and x.)	118
5. Zophar to Job (Chapter xi.)	141
6. Job to Zophar (Chapters xii.-xiv.)	149
IV. THE SECOND COLLOQUY (Chapters xv.-xxi.)	181
1. Eliphaz to Job (Chapter xv.)	185
2. Job to Eliphaz (Chapters xvi. and xvii.)	197
3. Bildad to Job (Chapter xviii.)	216
4. Job to Bildad (Chapter xix.)	230
5. Zophar to Job (Chapter xx.)	261
6. Job to Zophar (Chapter xxi.)	274
V. THE THIRD COLLOQUY (Chapters xxii.-xxvi.)	291
1. Eliphaz to Job (Chapter xxii.)	294
2. Job to Eliphaz (Chapters xxiii. and xxiv.)	304
3. Bildad to Job (Chapter xxv.)	321
4. Job to Bildad (Chapter xxvi.)	326
VI. THE SOLILOQUY OF JOB (Chapters xxvii.-xxxi.)	336
First Monologue (Chapters xxvii. and xxviii.)	342
Second Monologue (Chapters xxix.-xxxi.)	366
VII. THE INTERVENTION OF ELIHU (Chapters xxxii.-xxxvii.)	406
First Discourse (Chapters xxxii. 6-xxxiii. 33)	419
Second Discourse (Chapter xxxiv.)	437
Third Discourse (Chapter xxxv.)	455
Fourth Discourse (Chapters xxxvi. and xxxvii.)	463
VIII. THE THEOPHANY (Chapters xxxviii.-xlii. 6)	489
First Divine Remonstrance (Chapters xxxviii. 1-xli. 5)	506
Second Divine Remonstrance (Chapters xli. 6-xlii. 6)	527
IX. THE EPILOGUE (Chapter xlii. 7-17)	542

THE BOOK OF JOB.



INTRODUCTION.

THE Book of Job is admitted, with hardly a dissentient voice, to be the most sublime religious Poem in the literature of the world. Divines and Expositors, who have studied it with devotion, find it difficult to express their sense of its beauty, grandeur, and value. Nor is it Divines and Expositors alone who have been fascinated by the spell of this sublime Poem. It is hardly possible to speak of it to an educated and thoughtful man who does not acknowledge its extraordinary power, its unrivalled excellence; while men of genius, to whom the greatest works of literature in many languages are familiar, are forward to confess that it stands alone, far above the head of all other and similar performance. Thus, Thomas Carlyle, who can hardly be suspected of any clerical bias or prepossessions, says of this Book :¹ "I call that, apart from all theories about it, one of the grandest things ever written with pen. One feels, indeed, as if it were not Hebrew; such a noble universality, different from noble patriotism or noble sectarianism, reigns in it. A noble Book; all men's Book! It is our first, oldest statement of the never-ending Problem,—man's destiny, and God's way with him here in this earth. And all in such free flowing outlines; grand in its sincerity, in its simplicity; in its epic melody and repose of reconciliation. There is the seeing eye, the mildly understanding heart. So *true* every way; true eyesight and

¹ "Lectures on Heroes"—"The Hero as Prophet."

vision for all things; material things no less than spiritual. . . . Such living likenesses were never since drawn. Sublime sorrow, sublime reconciliation; oldest choral melody as of the heart of mankind:—so soft and great; as the summer midnight, as the world with its seas and stars! *There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit.*"

And yet this grand Poem is comparatively little read, and, even where it is read, it is but very imperfectly grasped and understood. Nor is it easy to read it with intelligence and a clear vigorous conception of its meaning. It abounds in allusions to ancient modes of thought and speculation; its long sequences of thought and its quick cogent dialectic are disguised and obscured, in part by the limitations of the proverbial form in which it is composed, and, in part, by the inevitable imperfections which cleave to translations of any and every kind, even the best. And while there are many able commentaries on it addressed to scholars, I know of only one—Canon Cook's in "The Speaker's Commentary"—from which the ordinary reader would be likely to derive much help; while even that, owing to the conditions under which it was written, leaves much to be desired. Yet there is no reason, in the Poem itself, why it should not be as well and intimately known, even to readers of the most limited education, as any one of Shakespeare's plays, and no reason why it should not become far more precious and instructive. That it is difficult to translate is true; but Renan has rendered it into the most exquisite French with admirable felicity and force. That every Chapter of it is studded with allusions which need to be explained, and that the argument of the Book needs to be "exposed" and emphasized, is also true; but both these services have been rendered to scholars by a crowd of Commentators, in the front rank of which stand such men as Schultens, Ewald, Schlottmann, Delitzsch, Dillmann, Merx, Renan, Godet, and Professor A. B. Davidson; and it surely cannot be impossible that the results of their labours, and of labours similar to theirs, should be given to the public in a popular and convenient form.

To achieve some such task as this—to make the Book of

Job readable, intelligible, enjoyable, to all who care to acquaint themselves with it, even though they should be familiar with none but our noble mother-tongue—has long been a cherished aim with me. Three times during the last twelve years I have revised my translation of the Poem, seeking to make it less and less unworthy of the Original; and at intervals, during those years, I have sought to acquaint myself with the best expositions of it published in Germany, England, France, and America. Thus equipped and prepared, I venture to offer to the public the results of my reading, and of a sincere, laborious, and long continued endeavour to enter into the meaning and spirit of this great Poem.

What I have aimed and tried to do is simply this: (1) To give a translation of the Poem somewhat more clear and accurate than that of our Authorized Version, and, in especial, a translation which should render the Poet's long lines, or sweeps, of consecutive thought more apparent. The Book belongs, as we shall see, to that class of Hebrew literature which is collectively designated the *Chokmah*, and is therefore composed in one of the most inflexible of literary forms,—the *proverbial*. At first sight it would seem utterly incredible that a mere succession of proverbs should prove an adequate instrument for expressing any of the grander and more harmonious conceptions of the human mind, above all for expressing linked sequences of thought long drawn out. But there is absolutely no literary form which does not prove flexible and elastic in the hands of genius. In the very "Book of Proverbs" itself the famous description of "Wisdom"¹ shews what even the proverb is capable of in the hands of a master.² And the Book of Job is written by a

¹ Proverbs viii.

² It should not be forgotten that our Lord, adopting the style of his age and of the teachers of his native land, spake in proverbs, and in parables which are but expanded proverbs. The ease with which He speaks hides from us his immense intellectual force, and a certain reverence, not always wise in the forms it assumes, often makes us shrink from discussing the intellectual claims of One whom we confess to be God as well as man. But if we would form an adequate and complete conception of Him, we must, with whatever modesty and reverence, reflect on his enormous, his immeasurable, superiority to all other Teachers in mental power. That He should use

hand more free and masterly than that of Solomon himself. At times, no doubt, the contracting influence of the inferior form is obvious, breaking up the train of thought into brief pictorial sentences, each of which has a certain rounded completeness in itself; but at other times, and even as a rule I think, the thought triumphs over the form, subdues it to its own more imperious necessities; gnome is linked to gnome by connections more or less subtle, so that protracted and noble sequences of argument or description are fairly wrought out. This characteristic feature of the style of the Poem I have endeavoured to preserve.

(2) Another aim has been to supply such explanations, or illustrations, of the innumerable allusions to the physical phenomena of the East, to Oriental modes of thought and philosophy, to the customs and manners of human life in the

so inflexible an instrument of expression as the proverb and make it flexible is no slight proof of his wisdom and intellectual force. But it is only as we compare his "sayings," and especially his paradoxes, which are usually in the gnomie form, with the sayings of the masters of human wisdom that we are sufficiently impressed with the range and grasp of his mind. A foot-note is not the place for a dissertation, or it would be easy to institute a comparison between the proverbial and parabolic utterances of our Lord and those of the wisest of the ancients and moderns. Take only one or two suggestive illustrations. Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" has won a secure place as a masterpiece of allegory by the suffrages of the best literary judges; but if our Lord had taken up the allegory, would He not have compressed it into a few sentences, without omitting any point of real value? and, beautiful as Bunyan's work is, will it for a moment compare with any one of the Parables considered even as a mere work of literary genius and art? Or, to come from parables to mere sayings, or gnomes. Lord Bacon has many fine "sentences." Schiller's saying, "Death is an universal, and *therefore* cannot be an evil," has won much applause. On the merit of Goethe's, "Do the duty that lies nearest to thee," Carlyle is never weary of insisting; and Carlyle himself has many compressed and noble sentences charged with a weight of meaning. But if we compare with these any of our Lord's sayings, such as, for example, "If a man will save his life, let him lose it;" or, "Let him that would be greatest among you serve,"—who does not feel that we rise at once into an immeasurably larger and deeper world of thought? The very way in which He quotes might be adduced as another proof of his extraordinary and unparalleled intellectual force; as when, for example, He takes the answer to the question, "Which is the first and best commandment?" from the lips of the Rabbis, and resolves it at once, from the correct answer of a legal puzzle, into a practical moral code which covers the whole of human life.

antique world, with which the Poem abounds, as a modern reader of the Western world may require; in short, so to annotate the Poem as that an Englishman of ordinary intelligence and culture may be able, not only to read it without difficulty, but to enter into and enjoy the large and crowded picture of a bygone age which it presents.

(3) And, above all, it has been my aim to lift the reader to the height of the great argument of the Poem, to articulate the processes of thought veiled, or half veiled, by its proverbial forms, to trace out the infinite variety of fluctuating spiritual moods which pulse through it and animate it. There is far more logic, as also far more of dramatic power, in the colloquies of the Book than we are apt to see in them, in the speeches of the Friends and the replies of Job. To bring out its logical connections, to expound *the argument* of the Poem, to follow it through all its windings to their several issues, and to shew how they all contribute to its triumphant close, has been my main endeavour.

On the other hand, while I am not conscious of having shirked a single difficulty, while I have tried to escape the censure which Young pronounced on those Commentators who—

each dark passage shun,
And hold a farthing candle to the sun,

I have not enumerated the readings, renderings, explanations of all who have gone before me, though I have considered most of them before arriving at my own conclusions. It is the vice of recent Commentators, especially in Germany, that they comment on each other rather than on the Sacred Text, and so produce works too tedious for mortal patience to endure. Moreover, by piling up commentary on commentary, they are apt more and more to get off the perpendicular, to draw apart from and perilously lean over the real facts of human life and experience, till there is much danger that the whole structure will come toppling to the ground. If, when we have them in our hands, any should ask us what we read, we should have to reply, with Hamlet, "Words, words, words!" and little but words. What we want in these busy and over-busy days are expositions in which each man will

give us his own conclusions based on his own study of the Word, and not his refutation of the conclusions at which his predecessors or rivals have arrived. And if any credit be conceded me, I hope it will not be that I have compiled a catena of opinions, or shewn how great a variety of meanings may be extracted from a single passage by scholars who seek to raise their own reputation on the torn and tarnished reputations of the scholars who preceded them, or by proving that they too can—

Torture one poor word ten thousand ways;

but that I have tried to bring the words of Scripture straight to the facts of human experience, and sought to interpret the former by the latter. As a rule I have simply given my own reading and my own interpretation—for which, however, I have frequently been indebted to the labours of others: only when the passage was exceptionally difficult, or important, have I asked the reader to consider the best readings or interpretations which differ from my own, that he might have the means of judging and determining the question for himself.

I do not propose to open my exposition with a long and elaborate Introduction; valuable essays and dissertations on the Book are easily accessible, and may be found in the works of any of the Commentators named on a previous page: but a few words on the date and origin, the scene, and, above all, the problem of the Book are indispensable.

As to the *Date* and *Origin* of the Poem nothing can be safely inferred—though on this point some scholars lay great stress—from the Aramæan words which are frequently employed in it; and that, not simply because the Aramæisms occur chiefly in the speech of Elihu, and are appropriate in his mouth, since he himself was an Aramæan; nor simply because all Hebrew poetry, of whatever age, is more or less Aramaic: but also and mainly because the presence of Aramæan words in any Scripture may indicate either its extreme antiquity or its comparatively modern date. For these Aramæisms—as “Rabbi” Duncan tersely puts the

conclusion of all competent scholars—are either “(1) late words borrowed from intercourse with the Syrians, or (2) early ones common to both dialects.” Any argument, therefore, which is based on the use of these words cuts both ways.

Nor, I think, do the other arguments commonly adduced on this point carry much weight, with the exception of one, which is so weighty as to be conclusive. Both the pervading tone of the Book and its literary style point steadily and unmistakably to the age of Solomon as the period in which it, at least, assumed the form in which it has come down to us. That which first impresses a thoughtful reader of the Poem is the noble universality which Carlyle found in it, “as if it were not Hebrew.” Although it is part of the Hebrew Bible, it is catholic in its tone and spirit. The persons who figure in it are not Jews; the scene is laid beyond the borders of Palestine; the worship we see practised in it is that of the patriarchal age: it does not contain a single allusion to the Mosaic laws or customs, or to the characteristic beliefs of the Jews, or to the recorded events of their national history. Hence many have concluded that it was written in the patriarchal age; by Moses, perhaps, before he was called to be the redeemer and lawgiver of his people, or by some Temanite or Idumean poet, whose work was afterwards translated into the Hebrew tongue. But to this conclusion there is, I think, at least one fatal objection. The literary form of the Poem, the *proverbial* form, decisively marks it out as one of the Chokmah books, and forbids us to ascribe it to any age earlier than that of Solomon.

It is beyond dispute that in his age, and under the influence of his commanding genius, a new kind of literature—new in spirit, new in form—came into vogue; of which we have some noble samples in the Book of Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, many of the Psalms, several of the Apocryphal Books, and even in the nobler passages of the Talmud. They are characterized by a catholic and universal spirit new in Hebrew literature, and might, one thinks, have been written by the sages and poets of almost any of the leading Oriental races. This non-Hebraic catholic tone, which

differentiates them from the other Hebrew Scriptures, was doubtless but one out of many results of the enlarged commerce with the great heathen world which commenced in the reign of David. During his reign the Hebrew Commonwealth entered into new and wider relations—political, mercantile, literary—with many of the nobler and more cultivated races of antiquity, which bore fruit in the reign of his son. In the court of Solomon there grew up, as Godet has pointed out, a school of *wisdom*, or of moral philosophy, which set itself to search more deeply into the knowledge of things human and divine. “Beneath the Israelite they tried to find the man; beneath the Mosaic system, that universal principle of the moral law of which it is an expression. Thus they reached to that idea of *wisdom* which is the common feature of the three books, Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes; of the wisdom whose delight is not in the Jews only, but in the *children of men*.” This endeavour to humanize Judaism, to spiritualize the precepts of Moses, “to reach that fundamental stratum of moral being in which the Jewish law and the human conscience find their unity,” is the distinctive “note” of the Chokmah literature.

And if the spirit, the ruling moral tone, of this literature is novel and original, so also is the form which its noblest productions assumed, viz., the proverbial, or parabolic. To utter ethical wisdom in portable and picturesque sentences, the wise saying often being wrought out into a little parable or poem complete in itself, was the task in which the leading minds of the Solomonic era took delight. We have only to compare their peculiar mode of expression—its weighty sententiousness, its conscious elaboration of metaphor, its devotion to literary feats and dexterities, and, in singular combination with these, its thoughtful handling of the moral problems which tax and oppress the thoughts of men—with “the lyrical cry” of many of the Psalmists of Israel, in order to become aware of the marked and immense difference between the two.

“Job” belongs to the *Chokmah* both in spirit and in form. Its noble and catholic tone of thought finds admirable expression in the graphic yet weighty gnomes of which it is for the

most part composed. And as it is beyond all comparison the most perfect and original specimen of the *Chokmah* school, we can hardly refer it to any age but that of Solomon, in which that school arose and in which it also achieved its most signal triumphs. This conclusion is confirmed by the admitted fact that "the Book of Job bears a far closer affinity in style and in modes of thought" to the Book of Proverbs than to any other portion of the Old Testament Scriptures.

It does not follow, however, that the Book of Job is a mere poem, a mere work of imagination, produced in the age to which the genius of Solomon gave its special character and form. If, on the one hand, it is impossible to take the Book as a literal story of events which transpired in the patriarchal age, if we must admit that the Story has passed through the shaping imagination of some unknown poet; on the other hand, it is, as Renan remarks, quite as impossible to believe that any poet of Solomon's age should have thrown himself back into an age so distant, and have maintained the tone of it throughout. Such a feat has never been achieved; such a feat was wholly foreign to the spirit of the time. We must admit, therefore, that the Poem had an historical basis; that it embalms a veritable chronicle; that a man named Job really lived and suffered—lived and suffered, moreover, in the times of the Patriarchs, since all the allusions of the Poem point to that age.

The most probable hypothesis of the date and origin of the Book, and that to which nearly all competent judges lend the weight of their authority, is, in short, that the story of Job, of his sufferings and his patience, was handed down by tradition from patriarchal times, through every succeeding generation, till, in the age of Solomon, at once the most catholic and the most literary period of Hebrew history, a gifted and inspired poet threw the tradition into the splendid dramatic form in which we now possess it. Just as the heroic deeds of the wandering Ulysses were recited by and preserved in the memories of the trained bards, or rhapsodists, of Greece for centuries, and at last took shape on the lips of the man called Homer or of the *gens* called Homêrids, but were only reduced to their present form and written down in the age of

Pisistratus ; so, I suspect, the story of Job was passed from lip to lip among the Abrahamides, and from memory to memory, growing in volume and in beauty as it went, till, in the literary age of Solomon, the Poet arose who gave it its final and most perfect form, and wrote it down for the edification and delight of all who should come after him.

As for the *Scene* of the Story, history and tradition combine with all the indications contained in the Poem itself to place it in the *Hauran*. On the east of the Jordan, in that strange, lovely, and fertile volcanic region which stretches down from Syria to Idumea, there is every reason to believe that Job dwelt, and suffered, and died, and in the upper part of it, north of Edom, north even of Moab, within easy reach of Damascus itself. The Arabs who live in this district to-day claim it as "the land of Job." The whole district, moreover, is full of sites and ruins which Tradition connects with his name. And it fulfils all the conditions of the Poem. The personages of the Story, for example, are admitted to be without exception descendants of Abraham—not through Isaac and Jacob, but through Ishmael, or Esau, or the sons of Keturah ; and it was in this great belt of volcanic land, stretching down from Damascus to Idumea, that most of these Abrahamides found their homes. On the east, too, the Hauran is bordered by "the desert," out of which came the great wind which smote the four corners of the house of Job's first-born. To this day it is rich in the very kinds of wealth of which Job was possessed, and is exposed to raids similar to those which deprived him of his wealth as in a moment. It presents, moreover, both the same natural features, being especially "for miles together a complete network of deep gorges,"—the wadys, or valleys, whose treacherous streams the Poet describes,¹ and the same singular combination of civic and rural life which is assumed throughout the Book. Even the fact that the robber-bands, which fell upon the ploughing oxen of Job and smote the ploughmen with the edge of the sword, came from the distant rocks of Petra, and that the bands which carried off his camels came from the distant plains of

¹ Cf. Chap. vi. 15–20.

Chaldea, point to the same conclusion. For, probably, Job had entered into compacts with the *nearer* tribes of the marauders, as the chiefs of the Hauran do to this day, paying them an annual tax, or mail, to buy off their raids, and was surprised by those more remote freebooters just as to this day the Hauranites are often pillaged by freebooting tribes from the neighbourhood of Babylon.

I take it, then, that we may with much reason conceive of Job as living, during the remote patriarchal age, amid the fertile plains of the Hauran—so fertile that even now its wheat (“Batanæan wheat,” as it is called) “is always at least twenty-five per cent. higher in price than other kinds,”—with its deep wadys and perfidious streams, the volcanic mountains rising on the horizon, and the wide sandy desert lying beyond them.

The *Problem* of the Book is not one, but manifold, and is not, therefore, easy to determine. No doubt, the Poet intended to vindicate the ways of God with men. No doubt, therefore, he had passed through and beyond that early stage of religious faith in which the heart simply and calmly assumes the perfect goodness of God, and had become aware that some justification of the Divine ways was demanded by the doubt and anguish of the human heart. The heavy and the weary weight of the mystery which shrouds the providence of God, the burden of this unintelligible world, was obviously making itself profoundly felt. There are many indications in the Poem itself that the age in which it took form was one of transition, one of growing scepticism; that the current beliefs were being called in question, that men could no longer be content with the moral and theological conceptions which had satisfied the world’s grey fathers. More than once, when he is passionately challenging the orthodox assertions of the Friends, Job seems to be giving utterance to misgivings which had struck coldly into his heart even while he still sunned himself in the unclouded favour of God. From the attitude assumed by Elihu, moreover, we may infer that the younger men of the time had already thought—or rather, perhaps, *felt*—out for themselves a broader

and more generous theology than that of their elders, and were not a little puzzled how to state it without giving them offence. And yet, though it proceeds on the lines just indicated, the popular conception of the Problem of this Book is not an adequate one; it fails to satisfy some of the leading conditions of the Story. That conception, which Mr. Froude, in his "Essay on Job," has eloquently expressed, is, that both Job and his Friends had assumed prosperity to be the invariable concomitant, or result, of righteousness, and adversity to be the no less invariable consequence of sin; and that Job was afflicted, although his righteousness was attested by God Himself, in order to shew that this interpretation of the Providential mystery was inadequate and partial, that it did not cover, and could not be stretched to cover, all the facts of human life. Those who have read Mr. Froude's charming Essay will not easily forget the force and humour with which he describes the endeavour of the Friends to stretch the old formula and make it cover the new fact, until it cracked and broke in their hands, and, in its rebound, smote them to the earth.¹ And there is much truth in this conception, though not the whole truth. Unquestionably the Book of Job does shew, in the most tragic and pathetic way, that good, no less than wicked, men lie open to the most cruel losses and sorrows; that these losses and sorrows are not always signs of the Divine anger against sin; that they are intended to correct and perfect the righteousness of the righteous,—or, in our Lord's figure, that they are designed to purge the trees which already bear good fruit, in order that they may bring forth more fruit.

But, after all, can it be the main and ruling intention of the Book to teach us that noble lesson? When we follow the Story to its close, do we not see that "the Lord gave to Job twice as much as he had before"? And, might we not fairly infer from the Story, as a whole, that the formula of Job's Friends was not so much too narrow as it is commonly held to be? that it might very easily be stretched till it covered the

¹ I must not be understood to imply, however, that Mr. Froude adopts the popular conception. He is far too acute a critic to miss the true Problem of this great Poem.

new fact? that where they were wrong was in assuming that happy outward conditions are the *immediate* result of obeying the Divine Law, and miserable outward conditions the *immediate* result of violating that Law? that, had they only affirmed that *in the long run* righteousness always conducts a man to prosperity and sin to adversity, they would have been sufficiently near the mark?

Even in our own day, Mr. Matthew Arnold—not a bigot surely, nor at all disposed to stand up for theological dogmas against verified facts—has affirmed and argued for this very conception: he has affirmed and re-affirmed it to be well-nigh impossible to escape the conviction that “the stream of tendency” is in favour of those who do well and adverse to those who do ill. And though some of us might word the proposition differently, yet he would betray a singular dulness or hardihood who should venture to question the main tenour and drift of it. The facts of history, experience, consciousness, compel us to believe that, *in the long run*,—though we may admit that the run is often very long, and that we do not see the end of it here—happy and auspicious conditions are vouchsafed to men, or to nations, who follow after righteousness, while those who walk in unrighteousness are overtaken by miserable and inauspicious conditions. Job was righteous. Did he suffer for his righteousness? Nay, but rather he suffered that he might be made more righteous; that he might learn to trust in God when all things were against him, when even God Himself seemed to be against him, as well as when all things went to his mind; he suffered in order that he might learn *that his very righteousness was not his own* in any sense which would warrant him in claiming it and in taking his stand upon it as against God: and, when he was thus stablished and perfected in righteousness, the stream of prosperity flowed back upon him in double tide.

We cannot, therefore, accept the popular conception of the meaning and intention of this great Poem as adequate and satisfactory. There is a higher and a far more gracious meaning in it, which rules and over-rules this lower meaning: and this higher intention is expressly stated in the Prologue. When the Poem opens, Job stands before us “perfect,” *i.e.*

single-hearted and sincere, without duplicity or hypocrisy—and “upright,” fearing God and eschewing evil. He is an Arab sheikh, or chieftain, of immense wealth, the richest as well as the best and wisest man of his race :

A creature such
As to seek through the regions of the earth
For one his like, there would be something failing
In him that should compare. I do not think
So fair an outward and such stuff within
Endows a man but he.

He is the priest of his family, if not of his clan. Unconscious of iniquity in himself, fearing nothing for his sons but that in the gaiety of their hearts they may have momentarily forgotten God, he nevertheless offers a weekly sacrifice in atonement of their possible sins. Over and around this good man, standing full in the sunshine, the dark clouds gather and roll ; the lightnings leap out and strike down all that he has, all that he loves : for many days neither sun nor stars appear ; the tempest beats him down till all hope that he will be saved seems taken away : but, at last, the clouds clear off, the sun shines forth with redoubled splendour, and we leave him a wealthier, better, wiser man than he was even at the first.

Now if we could see nothing but the earth on which he stood, and the sky which alternately frowned and smiled above his head, we might be unable to seize the moral and intention of the scene ; we might reasonably doubt whether the Poem was designed to teach us more than that, as righteousness conducts men to prosperity, so a tried and constant righteousness conducts them to a more stable and a more ample prosperity. But a door is opened into Heaven, and we are permitted to enter and “assist” at a celestial divan, a council to which God summons all the ministers of his kingly state. The King sits on the throne ; his ministers gather round him and sit in session : among them appears a spirit, here simply named the “Adversary,” or the “Accuser,” whose function is to scrutinize the actions of men, to present them in their worst aspect, that they may be thoroughly sifted and explored. He himself has sunk into an evil condition, for he delights in making even good men seem bad, in fitting good deeds with

evil motives. Self is his centre, not God; and he suspects all the world of a selfishness like his own. He cannot, or will not, believe in an unselfish, a disinterested goodness. When Jehovah challenges him to find a fault in Job, he boldly challenges Jehovah to put Job to the proof, and avows beforehand his conviction that it will be found that Job has served God only for what he could gain thereby. This challenge, as Godet has been quick to observe, does not merely affect the character of man: it touches the very honour of God Himself: "for if the most pious of mankind is incapable of loving God gratuitously—that is, really, it follows that God is incapable of making Himself loved." And, "*as no one is honoured except in so far as he is loved*," by this malignant aspersion the Adversary really assails the very heart and crown of the Master of the universe. Jehovah, therefore, takes up the challenge, and Himself enters the lists against the Adversary; Jehovah undertaking to prove that man is capable of a real and disinterested goodness, Satan undertaking to prove that the goodness of man is but a veiled selfishness; and the heart of Job is to be the arena of the strife.

Now it is not necessary that we should believe that such a scene as this actually took place, that such a Celestial Divan was held, that such a challenge was given and accepted. All this *may be* only the dramatic form in which the Poet clothed certain spiritual facts and convictions; though, on the other hand, we know too little of the spiritual world to deny that a transaction occurred in it which can only be rendered to human thought by such words and figures as the Poet employs.¹ But we should miss the very intention of this inspired Teacher if we did not infer from his "scene in heaven" some such spiritual verities as these: that there is a Good and Supreme Spirit, who is ever seeking to promote the true welfare of men; that there is an evil spirit, who is ever seeking to deprave men and dishonour them; that even this evil spirit is under law to God, and is used by God to promote the ultimate welfare of men, and that, "somehow, good is to be the end of ill." Such a conception of the function of the spirit of all ill runs right in the teeth of the modern

¹ See "The Genesis of Evil, and other Sermons," pp. 280-286.

sceptical suggestion, which, admitting that the plan of the great Architect of the universe may have been divinely wise, contends that somehow the devil—an independent spirit well-nigh as powerful as the Creator Himself—“contrived to become clerk of the works, and has put in a good deal which was not included in the original specification:” even as it also runs straight in the teeth of those who deny the existence of an evil spirit, and of those who fear that evil is too strong to be utterly overcome by good. But I do not see how it can be denied that our Poet firmly *believed* both that such a spirit is actively at work in the universe, and that his evil activity will, in the end, be seen only to have contributed to larger good.

We may lay much or little stress on the dramatic drapery of this vital scene, as the bent of our minds may determine, but we must all lay great stress on the design announced in it on pain of misapprehending the main scope of the Poem. For here the ruling intention of the Poem is clearly and distinctly set forth. That intention is to prove, and to prove to the whole hierarchy of heaven, that God is capable of winning, and that man is capable of cherishing, an unselfish and disinterested goodness; that he *can* serve God for nought, that he can hold fast his confidence in God even when that supreme Friend seems to be turned into his Foe.

This is the higher intention of the Poem, this the heavenward intention. But Job does not, and can not, know of the great issue to be fought out in his own soul. Had he known what Jehovah was proving in and by him, the trial would have been no trial to him, but an honour to be accepted with impassioned gratitude and devotion. He would have cheerfully borne any calamities, any heart-searching miseries, by which the love of God and man was to be demonstrated. He would have rejoiced—as surely *we* may well rejoice—in the goodness of God in undertaking to prove the goodness of man. Of all this, however, he was necessarily unconscious. And, therefore, the Poem must have a second intention, subservient to the first and highest. The Problem must be, and is, a double one, having an earthward as well as a heavenward face. And, on its earthly side, the Problem is not stated for

us in the Poem itself; we have to think it out for ourselves. Apparently, it is much more complicated than the other, and cannot be so simply stated. But so far as I can gather it, it may be stated thus: that the dark mystery of human life is capable of a happy solution; that the afflictions of the righteous are designed for correction, not for punishment; and that the inequalities of this life are to be redressed in the life to come.

This, then, I take to be the double intention, or purpose, of the Poem. On the one hand it was designed to demonstrate to the spiritual powers in heavenly places that God is capable of inspiring a pure and disinterested love, by proving that man is capable of a real, an unselfish goodness; and, on the other hand, it was designed to relieve the mystery of human life by shewing that its miseries are corrective, and by strengthening the hope of a future life in which all the wrongs of time are to be redressed.

The first intention is speedily and obviously carried out. Jehovah baffles and silences the Adversary, who, indeed, seems to have made but a sorry stand. He vanishes from the scene before the conflict has well begun. As, when Job is robbed of goods, children, health, he does not fulfil the prediction of the Adversary by renouncing God, Satan is at once overcome. So complete is his overthrow that the Poet does not deign even to mention it, but lets him silently drop out from the list of his *dramatis personæ*. But, for other and nobler ends than the defeat of him "who was a liar from the beginning," the conflict is permitted to rage on in the heart of Job. He is tried ^a all ways—not only by the loss of wealth, children, health, though even these losses were so contrived as to mark him out for a man "smitten *by God* and afflicted"—but also by the despair of his wife, by the condolences and rebukes of his Friends, by the scorn of his tribe,¹ by the insolence of the very outcasts whom he had once disdained to rank with the dogs of his flocks,² by the laughter and mockery of the little children who played about the ash-heap on which he lay:³ tried, most of all, by having his good conscience enlisted against the goodness of God, by the temptation to deem Him inequitable,

¹ Chap. xix. 13—15.

² Chap. xxx. 1—15.

³ Chap. xix. 18.

tyrannical, pitiless. But amid all his trials he constantly and passionately refused to part with his integrity, or to confess sins of which he believed himself to be innocent: nor would he, under any pressure, renounce God or let go, for more than a moment, his confidence in Him. Like a loving child chastised for an unknown fault, or for no fault at all, he turned *toward*, not *from*, his Father in heaven; the deepest and most abiding emotion of his heart being, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." In the paroxysms of his anguish and despair he might speak wildly; he might impugn the equity of God: nevertheless, it is always to *God* that he appeals; and, at the close of the Story, God Himself, with the magnanimity constantly attributed to Him in Holy Writ, admits that in his wildest upbraidings Job had not been guilty of wilful wrong, nay, He affirms even that Job had kept his very lips in righteousness: to the three humbled and amazed Friends, who thought that they had stood up for God against Job, He says, "*Go to my servant, and ask him to intercede for you: for ye have not spoken of me aright, like my servant Job.*"

Nor is it less clear that the second and subsidiary intention of the Poem is also carried out; though I must not now attempt to point out how, through the whole course of the Book, we are shewn that the afflictions of the righteous are signs not of wrath but of love; that the dark mystery which hangs over human life is capable of a happy solution: and that the inequalities of this life are to be redressed in the life to come. There will be many opportunities of recurring to these points as the Exposition proceeds. For the present it will be enough to say that, even when we reach the end of Job's First Colloquy with the Friends, when, therefore, his spirit was smarting with the keenest anguish, the darkness of his despair is broken by some faint rays of hope; that even then he could argue that as there is a chance for a tree that, even when it is felled, it will sprout again at the scent of water, so for man there may be a hope that, though he die, he will live again. When we reach the end of the Second Colloquy, and his spirit is gaining some measure of composure this hope has risen into the assurance that his Redeemer lives

and that "without," *i.e.* apart from, "his mortal flesh," he shall see God. While at the close of the Third Colloquy, when he has triumphed over the Friends, he affirms that, whatever appearances may say to the contrary, God is and must be just, and that the fear of the Lord this is wisdom, and to turn from evil this is understanding.

Thus both ends are gained, God is vindicated, and man is reconciled to God.

A new polemical value has been given to the Book of Job by the attitude and tone modern scepticism has assumed, or re-assumed. The whole school represented by the Author of "Supernatural Religion"—and it is a large one, and has many disciples among the unlearned—sets, or affects to set, great value on the ethical element of the Christian Faith. They affirm that Christ "carried morality to the sublimest point attained, or even attainable, by humanity." But they are very anxious to divorce the ethical from the supernatural element, although in the New Testament the two are interwoven into one piece, so that it is impossible to detach the one from the other without utterly destroying the whole fabric. And, hence, they also affirm both that the morality of Christ was the offspring of a merely human brain, uncharged by any Divine energy or inspiration; and that this morality will never take its due place or exert its due influence until we accept it simply as "the perfect development" and expression of the moral faculties natural to man. So long as we cleave to the belief in a *revelation* of the will of God rather than to a discovery of that high Will by mortal powers, we place ourselves, it appears, at a serious disadvantage, and shall be the richer and the better for giving it up. "We gain infinitely more than we lose in abandoning belief in the reality of Divine Revelation. While we retain pure and unimpaired the treasure of Christian morality, we relinquish nothing but the debasing elements added to it by human superstition."¹

Now it would be hard to find a more cogent and complete answer to this argument for the sufficiency of Morality apart from Revelation than that supplied by the Book of Job. For,

¹ "Supernatural Religion," vol. ii. part iii. chap. iii.

obviously, Job had no miraculous and supernatural revelation of the will of God. He moved and lived and had his being outside the charmed and sacred circle in which such revelations were, or were supposed to be, vouchsafed. His one importunate complaint throughout the book is that he cannot see God, nor hear his voice, nor learn what his will and intention are. There is not a single reference in the Poem to the Hebrew law, to the Sacred Writings accredited by the Jews, or to the forms of life and worship which obtained among them. He is indebted for all that he knows of God to the great primitive Tradition, to the inherited and slowly developed conceptions of the human mind. And, on the other hand, it is equally obvious that he had a pure and noble morality, hardly inferior to that taught by Christ Himself. The tumultuous agitation and excitement of his spirit under the trials to which he was exposed, prove him to be very man; and his own description of the temptations which he had successfully encountered (cf. Chap. xxxi.) shews that he was open to the very influences by which men in all ages have been turned from righteousness. And yet no one can read the Poem without feeling throughout that he is brought into contact with a man of a singularly pure, high, and noble soul; his own delineation of himself (Chaps. xxix. and xxxi.) shews him to have been a masterpiece of human goodness, with "a daily beauty in his life" up to the level of most men's exceptional and heroic moments: and Jehovah Himself is represented as pronouncing him what we feel him to be, "a perfect man and an upright, one that feareth God and escheweth evil."

In his case, then, the conditions on which modern scepticism builds its hopes for the race were fulfilled: without a supernatural revelation, he was nevertheless possessed of a morality as pure and high as can well be conceived. He ought, therefore, on this hypothesis, not only to have been content, but to have felt that he was infinitely better off than if a Divine Revelation had been added to the pure and unimpaired treasure of his morality. *Was* he content with his treasure, then? *did* he feel that it met and satisfied every craving of his spirit? On the contrary, his whole soul goes

forth in a piercing cry for the very Revelation which our modern sceptics pronounce utterly superfluous. What they would contemptuously "abandon" he passionately craves and insists upon. He is tortured by the very longing which they assure us it was impossible he should ever experience, and knew no rest until he saw for himself the God of whom he had heard with the hearing of the ear, and in the light of that great Revelation learned how "vile" he was.

For purposes of study the Poem is most conveniently divided into nine parts: (1) The Proem, or Prologue, in which the Problem about to be discussed is stated: Chapters i. and ii. (2) The Curse pronounced by Job on his Day—the occasion from which the discussion springs up: Chapter iii. (3) The First Colloquy of the great Argument: Chapters iv.—xiv. (4) The Second Colloquy: Chapters xv.—xxi. (5) The Third Colloquy: Chapters xxii.—xxvi. (6) The Soliloquy of Job: Chapters xxvii.—xxxi. (7) The Intervention of Elihu: Chapters xxxii.—xxxvii. (8) The Theophany, or the Intervention of Jehovah: Chapters xxxviii.—xlii. 6. And, (9) The Epilogue, in which the issue of this great controversy is recorded: Chapter xlii. 7-17.

SECTION I.
THE PROLOGUE.

CHAPTERS I AND II.

THE Book of Job has, as we have seen, a double purpose or intention. Its higher intention is to shew that God is capable of inspiring, by shewing that man is capable of cherishing, that genuine and disinterested affection which is the very soul of goodness: this is the fact which Satan challenges and which Jehovah undertakes to prove. Its second, but hardly secondary, intention is like unto the first, viz., to shew that, while the goodness of which man is capable has a natural tendency, under the rule and providence of a righteous God, to secure for him a full measure of temporal prosperity and happiness, it is nevertheless independent of such a reward, that it can dispense with it; or, in other words, that man is capable of loving right simply because it is right, and of hating wrong purely because it is wrong, even though he should not gain by it, but lose. In this aspect of it, the Poem is an emphatic condemnation of the "utilitarian" theory of morals, which assumes that men follow after that which is good only because they find goodness to be profitable for all the uses of this present world; an emphatic condemnation also of that religious selfishness which cannot do good hoping for nothing again, but demands its "pour-boire" for every act of duty, if not in this world, at least in that which is to come.

At the outset Job is placed before us as the model of a perfect man,—“the very paragon of his age,” “without his peer in all the earth.” His outward conditions are large and prosperous: he has seven sons and three daughters, who seem to have been not unworthy of even such a father as he, and

are united to each other, and to him, by a singularly close and cordial attachment. He is not a nomad, but a settled and wealthy landed proprietor, with a vast estate and immense possessions, and he is recognized as "the greatest of the Sons of the East," probably, that is, as the wisest and noblest, as well as the wealthiest, man of his age. So far he presents that combination of personal goodness with happy outward conditions which the ancients regarded as the normal and invariable result of the righteous rule of God. Such a combination, however, was sure to give rise, sooner or later, to the suspicion that the goodness which had prosperity for its result might also have it for its motive; that the righteousness even of the best of men might prove to be only a subtle and refined selfishness. That this question might be raised in its most searching and crucial form, and answered in a manner the most complete, authoritative, final, it is carried up into heaven, where alone the profound mysteries of life can be adequately handled; and it is argued out—nay, fought out—there. A fallen angel, a "son of God," who has sunk from his first estate, challenges the reality of human goodness: "Is it *for nought* that Job fears God? Is not his piety simply a matter of profit and loss? Does he not do right only for the gain he may get thereby? Take away the gain, and what will become of his goodness?" Confident in the sincerity of his servant Job, assured that *he* at least is not one of those—

Who, trimm'd in forms and visages of duty,
Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves,

Jehovah accepts the challenge. He consents that Job shall be stripped of all that he has; that all his gains shall be taken from him, and only his goodness left. Nor need any man question either the justice or the kindness of God in exposing him to what seems so cruel an experiment. The path of danger is the path of honour. Could Job have known, as Jehovah did know, that he was being put to the proof in order both that all the hierarchy of heaven might be convinced of man's capacity for a sincere and genuine piety, and that all subsequent generations of men, looking back on the trial of his faith, might find it pregnant with incentives to courage,

and patience, and hope—could he have foreseen this “*end of the Lord,*” we may be very sure he would have rejoiced that he was counted worthy to suffer for an end so large and so noble.

That, however, he did not, and could not, know. Nevertheless “*he endured,*” and entered into the blessedness of the man who, when tried, is found constant. Deprived of flocks and herds, his faithful servants and his loving children, in a single day; deprived of them with a suddenness and in forms which would inevitably mark him out as a man “*smitten of God and afflicted,*” he nevertheless retained his integrity, and possessed his soul in patience. So far from renouncing God because his gains were gone,

and all
That made him happy at one stroke was taken
For ever from the world,

he fell on his face before Him and worshipped Him. The Adversary has only one device left; for, among other features which distinguish the “Adversary” of this Poem from the “Satan” of later inspired authors is the fact that he is represented as using only outward means, that he has no recourse to those inward spiritual suggestions by which *we* are most keenly tempted; these are left to the wife of Job and his friends. Job has lost much, but not all: his health remains, and, with his health, the possibility of recovering what he has lost. Of this too, therefore, Satan seeks, and is permitted, to despoil him. He smites Job with the most loathsome and monstrous form of disease known among men, a form, too, which was universally regarded as the revenge taken by an insulted Heaven on some heinous and enormous sin. And now, in the fullest and extremest sense, Job is stripped of all that he had gained by loving and serving God; nay, and even to his own mind, he is stripped of it by the very hand of God Himself. Nevertheless, he submits without a murmur, and shews himself as ready to accept evil from the hand of the Lord as good. His very wife turns upon him, and counsels him to utter the exact words which Satan had flattered himself that *he* could wring from his lips (comp. Chap. i. 11, final clause, with final clause of Chap. ii. 9). And, still, Job sinned

not with his lips. True, a curse does fly from them at last; the silent sympathy of the Friends evokes from him what no pressure of loss and misery could extort from his constant soul: but when he opens his lips he curses,—not God, but—himself, and the day which gave him birth.

Jehovah, then, has already gained the victory over the Adversary. Satan has exhausted his resources; he has nothing more that he can do; and he sullenly acknowledges his defeat by flight. His baneful figure vanishes from the Poem. We see him no more; no, not even at the end of the Drama, when the other persons of the Story come forward to receive the final sentence of Jehovah. For God and for us, to heaven and to earth, the patient Job has demonstrated that a genuine and unselfish goodness, a goodness which can not only dispense with reward but can also endure every form of loss, indignity, pain, is possible to man even here upon the earth and under the inauspicious conditions of time.

CHAPTER I.—*There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. This man was perfect and upright, and one who feared God and eschewed evil. 2. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. 3. His cattle also were seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and [he had] a very large household; so that this man was great before all the Sons of the East.*

4. Now his sons were wont to make a banquet each of them at his house on his day; and they used to send and bid their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. 5. And so it was, when the days of the banquet had gone round, Job sent for them, and hallowed them; and he gat him up early in the morning, and offered up burnt offerings according to their number: for Job said, Haply, my sons have sinned and renounced God in their hearts. Thus did Job alway.

6. Now it happened on a day, when the Sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, that Satan also came among them. 7. And the Lord said to Satan, Whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord and said, From hurrying to and fro in the earth, and from going up and down in it. 8. Then said the Lord to Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job? for there is none like him on the earth, a perfect man and an upright, one that feareth God and escheweth evil. 9. And Satan answered the Lord and said, Is it for nought that Job feareth God? 10. Thou, hast Thou not made a fence round him, and round his house, and round all that he hath? Thou hast blessed the work of his

hands, and his cattle spread themselves abroad over the land. 11. But only put forth thine hand and touch all that he hath,¹ [and then see] if he will not renounce Thee to thy face. 12. And the Lord said to Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thine hand; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.

13. Now it happened on a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in the house of their brother, the first born, (14) there came a messenger to Job and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses grazing close by, (15) when the Sabæans fell upon them, and carried them off; and they smote the young men with the edge of the sword; and I am escaped, even I alone, to tell thee. 16. While he was yet speaking, there came another, and said, A fire of God fell from heaven, and burned the flocks and the young men, and consumed them; and I am escaped, even I alone, to tell thee. 17. While he was yet speaking, there came another, and said, The Chasdim formed three bands, and rushed upon the camels, and carried them off, and smote the young men with the edge of the sword; and I am escaped, even I alone, to tell thee. 18. While he was yet speaking, there came another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in the house of their brother, the first born, (19) when, lo, there came a great wind from across the desert, and smote the four corners of the house, so that it fell on the young folk, and they are dead; and I am escaped, even I alone, to tell thee.

20. Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head; and he fell on the ground and worshipped, (21) saying: Naked came I from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken; blessed be the name of the Lord.

22. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God with wrong.

CHAPTER II.—Again it happened on a day, when the Sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, that Satan also came to

¹ The ellipsis of verse 11 requires to be filled up with some such words as "and see," or, "then see." Similar ellipses are not uncommon in Oriental literature. Thus in the Corân we read (Sura xxv. verses 9 and 22): "They say, What sort of apostle is this? He eateth food and walketh the streets. Unless an angel be sent down and take part in his warnings, or a treasure be thrown down to him, or he have a garden that supplieth him with food, . . . and these unjust persons say, Ye follow but a man enchanted." And again: "They who look not forward to meet us say, If the angels be not sent down to us, or unless we behold our Lord. . . . Ah, they are proud of heart, and exceed with great excess." In each of these cases we must supply the words "we will not believe," in order to complete the sense. Many such ellipses may be found in the Corân alone.

present himself before the Lord. Then said the Lord to Satan, Whence comest thou? 2. And Satan answered the Lord and said, From hurrying to and fro in the earth, and from going up and down in it. 3. And the Lord said to Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on earth, a perfect man and an upright, one that feareth God and escheweth evil? And still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou didst move me against him, to swallow him up without cause. 4. And Satan answered the Lord and said, A skin for a skin, and all that a man hath will he give up for his life: (5) but only put forth thine hand, and touch his bone and his flesh, [and then see] if he will not renounce Thee to thy face. 6. And the Lord said to Satan, Behold him in thine hand; only spare his life.

7. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with a grievous ulcer from the sole of his foot even to his crown. 8. And he took him a sherd to scrape himself withal as he sat among the ashes. 9. And his wife said to him, Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity? Renounce God, and die! 10. But Job said to her, Thou speakest as one of the impious women speaketh. Shall we, then, accept the good from God, and shall we not accept the evil?

In all this Job sinned not with his lips.

11. Now three of Job's friends heard of all this evil that had befallen him; and they came each from his place—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuchite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had concerted together to come and condole with him and to comfort him. 12. But when they lifted up their eyes from afar and knew him not, they lifted up their voice and wept; and they rent their mantles, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. 13. So they sat down with him upon the ground for seven days and seven nights; and none spake a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great.

CHAPTER I. Verse 1.—The derivation of the word "Job" is still undetermined. Some, deriving it from an Arabic root, contend that it means "*the penitent one*,"—a conjecture confirmed, if not suggested, by the fact that, in the Corân, Job is designated, "he that turns or repents." But, with more reason, most Commentators assume it to be derived from a Hebrew verb which signifies to fight against, to persecute: in which case, the word being here used in its passive sense, it would mean "*the persecuted one*," the man who has known afflictions, in short, "the man of sorrows" of the antique world. All we certainly know of it is that the name was borne by a son of Issachar (Gen. xlv. 13), and by the hero of this great Poem.

"A man in the land of Uz," *i.e.* a Hauranite. The catholicity, or universalism, of the Poet comes out in the very selection of his hero. He saw, as Professor Davidson remarks, "that God was not confined to the Jew, but was and must be everywhere the Father of his children, however imperfectly they attained to the knowledge of Him; he saw that the human heart was the same, too, everywhere, that it everywhere proposed to itself the same problems, and rocked and tossed under the same uncertainties; that its intercourse with Heaven was alike, and alike awful, in all places; and away down far in that great Desert, stretching into infinite expanse, where men's hearts draw in from the imposing silence deep still thoughts of God, he lays the scene of his great Poem. He knows, Jew though he be, that there is something deeper far than Judaism, or the mere outward forms of any Dispensation; that God and man are the great facts, and the great problem" their relation to each other.

The description of this Verse gives a complete view of Job's character. The word translated "perfect" does not imply that he was absolutely without sin, but that he was simple, single-hearted; that his character was woven of one piece throughout, that there was no duplicity in it; that by confession and sacrifice he had been absolved from such offences as he had committed, so that he was free from conscious, wilful, habitual sin. In short, he was what Shakespeare calls a man of "a *clear* spirit." The epithet "perfect," as distinguished from and complemented by "upright," signifies that he was *inwardly* lacking in none of the qualities and attributes of a righteous man, and that this inward righteousness and completeness wrought itself out in a well-balanced and erect life.

The first two epithets of the Verse depict him as he was in himself; the second two in his relation to Heaven. He walked in that "fear of the Lord" which is both the beginning and the end of wisdom, and necessarily, therefore, maintained a steadfast abhorrence of evil in every form. There can be no doubt that the four epithets taken together are intended to set Job before us as an ideally perfect man, a man not only morally blameless but also both sincerely and scrupu-

lously religious; a man whose virtue and piety are beyond suspicion: for this is the fundamental assumption of the Poem, the fact on which the whole Story turns and proceeds; moreover Jehovah Himself is introduced as attesting and confirming it (Chap. i. 8; and Chap. ii. 3). The best commentary on the whole verse is contained in Chapters xxix. and xxxi., in which Job depicts himself as he was in the happy days when "the Almighty was yet with him."

Verse 3 describes the possessions of Job. The word rendered "substance" in the Authorized Version, and here rendered "cattle," always means "live stock." Ritter tells us that a Hauranite who now owns *five* yoke of oxen is held to be a man of station and opulence; "*five hundred* yoke" would make a prince of him. As these oxen are, and were, mainly used for ploughing, Job must have held a large landed estate. The "seven thousand sheep" imply, of course, that he was a wealthy sheep-master, as well as a farmer on a large scale. The "three thousand camels" imply, probably, that he was also a princely merchant, sending out large caravans to trade in the cities and among the tribes of the East,—as perhaps we might also infer from the frequent references to these travelling caravans in the body of the Poem.¹ The "five hundred she-asses" confirm the impression of vast wealth,—the she-ass being held to be far more valuable than the male, because of the milk she yielded; this milk, then as now, being greatly prized in the East. The word rendered "household," and in the margin of our English Bible "husbandry," is of somewhat dubious import; but it probably indicates that, for the various uses of trade and agriculture, Job possessed a vast retinue, a large clan, of ploughmen, shepherds, camel-drivers, with their guards, overseers, traffickers, and scribes. If we combine the several items of this enumeration we can well understand how Job may have been reckoned the greatest prince among the *beni-Kedem*, or "Sons of the East,"—a name given to the Arab tribes on the east of Palestine, all of whom claimed, as they still claim, to be Abrahamides, *i.e.* the sons of Abraham; the vast "motley race," as Jeremiah calls them, who haunted the wide tracts

¹ Cf. Chap. vi. 15—21.

stretching from Egypt to the Euphrates. We should emphasize the fact, too, that Job, by the very catalogue of his possessions, is shewn to be not a mere nomad, like many of these Sons of the East. Obviously he had a large settled estate, cultivated by his slaves and the freemen of his clan. The Hauran is still covered with the ruins of ancient cities. And from the constant allusions in the Poem to "the city," the nobles of which did him reverence, and to "the gate" in which he sat and administered justice, gave counsel in emergencies, his lightest word or look being eagerly caught up and deferred to,¹ we may be sure that his estate lay in the immediate vicinity of a populous city, if it did not include it.

Verse 4.—Job seems to have been singularly happy in his children. His seven sons each had "his day" for entertaining the rest, whether that day were his birthday, and so occurred only once in the year, or one of the seven days in the annual feasts held in spring and again in autumn, or whether, as seems most probable, it was a day in every week. In any case it is obvious that they lived together in a frank brotherly way. That they invited their three sisters to their feasts implies that there was nothing riotous or excessive in their mirth. And the fact that, on the day on which they all perished while attending the banquet of the first-born, the sheep were out at pasture and the oxen ploughing in the fields, seems to indicate that the feasting was no interruption to the regular work of the estate; that the banquet, then as now, was given only toward the close of the day. The inference is confirmed by another fact, or, rather, by a reasonable deduction from it. It seems probable that the day on which, "early in the morning," Job assembled his sons for purification and worship, was also the day on the evening of which his eldest son entertained his brothers and sisters in his house; for he had seven sons, and if each of these "had his day" every week, as the best Commentators think they had, clearly the whole week, or at least every evening in the week, would be occupied by the seven banquets; so that Job would be compelled to take the morning of one of those days for his solemn act of worship,

¹ Cf. Chap. xxix. 7—17.

and would probably take the first of the week, the day of the first-born. So much, indeed, seems implied in the phrases of the next verse,—“early in the morning,” and, “when the days of the banquet had gone round.” But if this be so, then the children of Job perished on the very day on which, by sacrifice and worship, they had been purged from all sin. When could they have died more happily?

It is notable, however, that Job himself did not attend these banquets; for it indicates that there was real mirth at them—a mirth and gaiety more suitable to the young than to the aged. It is also notable that though he did not austere-ly frown on them, he watched these festivities with some anxiety, lest any sin should blend with and contaminate the mirth. We are not therefore to conceive of him, however, as fearing any grave outward sin, any immorality; for he knew what the training of his sons had been, and how well-disposed they were, and how truly they loved each other. But he does seem to have feared lest, even if they should escape

such wanton, wild, and usual slips
As are companions noted and most known
To youth and liberty,

they might at times let their merriment run to excess, and that, in the gaiety of their hearts, they might forget the Giver of all good, or even cherish the persuasion that a life of self-enjoyment was better than a life of duty and obedience.

No doubt this incident of the constantly recurring banquets is inserted into the Story—from which so much is necessarily left out—not only, nor mainly, to pave the way for a subsequent incident, and to shew us how easily and naturally all Job’s children might be carried off at one fell swoop; but also, and chiefly, to indicate how perfect and vigilant was the piety of Job, and to supply us with one of the many forms it assumed.

Verse 5.—When the week of banquets was ended, Job invited his sons to his own house that he might “hallow” or “sanctify” them, *i.e.* see and cause them to go through the ceremonial ablutions by which men in the earliest ages prepared themselves for worship: for *Job’s* day was a holy day, a

day devoted to God, whether it were, as some suppose, the seventh day of the week, or, as others with more probability conjecture, the first day of the week. That no hint of "the sabbath" is given here is another indication of the non-Hebraic, the catholic, tone of the Book. And still another such indication is to be found in the form of Job's sacrifice. "Whole burnt offerings," offerings in which the whole victim was consumed in the fire, were as familiar in the patriarchal age to the non-Israelitish tribes of the East as to the Israelites themselves, as we may learn from the colloquy of Balak with Balaam recorded in Numbers xxiii. and in Micah vi. 5-8; so that there is no allusion even to the Hebrew ritual in this description of the sacrifice by which Job purified his sons. Strictly patriarchal and un-Jewish, moreover, is the fact that Job was his own priest, the priest of his family; that the right and power to offer sacrifice are here regarded as a function of mere fatherhood, that as yet we find no trace of a sacerdotal caste.

It should be observed, too, before we quit this Verse—for it is very strange and curious—that the sin into which Job feared his children might have fallen is the very sin to which he himself was tempted and from which he escaped only by the skin of his teeth. "Haply, my sons have sinned *in renouncing God* in their hearts." What might have been a momentary and half-unconscious treason in them threatened to become a deliberate and fatal treason with him. And this very fear of Job for the fidelity of his sons indicates, I think, that, even before his trial, he had been debating in his own heart whether human goodness was not very much a matter or habit, whether it was real and would bear a severe strain, and that he had felt there was much in the providence of God both to quicken and to feed such a doubt. Why should he have dreaded lest his children should fall into this special sin had he not felt that there were doubts in the air and temptations—speculations rife among the younger and more thoughtful men of the tribes perhaps—which laid them specially and perilously open to it?

Verses 6-12.—That this question of the genuineness, the reality and power, of human virtue may be determined at once

and for ever, the scene is changed, and we are admitted into the Cabinet of Heaven. It is a highday and holiday even there. Just as the sons of Job were gathered in their father's house below, so, above, the sons of God, the ministers who do his will, the thousands who

at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest,

as well those who "serve" as those who only "stand and wait," are gathered round the Father of an infinite Majesty. And with, or among, them comes one who is here designated the "Adversary," or the "Accuser," *i.e.* the calumniator and detractor.¹ The Arabs call this strange hostile being the "busy one;" St. Peter calls him the "peripatetic" (1 Peter v. 8)—names which well accord with the description of him here put into his own mouth. In some respects he is, no doubt, or seems to be, less malignant and less potent than the "devil" of later speakers and authors; but there can be no doubt, I think, that we are to identify the "Adversary" of Job with the "Satan" of subsequent Scriptures; with, for example, the Satan whom our Lord Himself charged with having bound an infirm woman, "lo, these eighteen years;" with the Satan who defeated, or hindered, St. Paul's friendly intention of visiting the Thessalonians "once and again," and whose "messenger, sent to buffet him," the same Apostle recognized in his "thorn," or "stake" rather, in the flesh. Nor can there be any doubt that throughout Scripture the existence of myriads of holy spirits, called into being before the creation of the physical universe, who delight to do the will of God, is either assumed or affirmed: or that the existence of an evil and malignant spirit, who seeks to thwart the kind and holy will of the God whom he once obeyed, is implied or even expressly asserted. How far the dramatic representation of this scene in heaven is to be taken as historical is an open question, though it should be remembered that similar scenes are described in other and later books of Scripture, even to the last. (1 Kings xxii. 19-22; Zech. iii. 1, 2; Rev. xii. 9.) But, as Professor Davidson

¹ The word "Satan" is not used in the Book of Job as a proper name, as an appellation, although in our Translation it is so used for the sake of clearness, but only as an epithet.

has pointed out,¹ this noble passage will have been written in vain, at least for us, unless we gather from it some such general conceptions as these:—That all the powers of the universe, whether physical or spiritual, whether good or evil, whether their intents be wicked or charitable, are in the hand of God, and subserve the good pleasure of his will: that there is no eternal dualism, no power capable of engaging the Maker and the Ruler of the universe in an endless conflict or of ultimately thwarting his designs: that there are pure and happy spirits who, sent by Him, conduct men through this scene of trial and education, ministering to their inward and deepest needs: and that there is an evil spirit, himself a son of God by nature and memory, though not by love and moral determination, who, while he seeks to thwart God and injure men, is compelled to work together with the other sons of God for the ultimate fulfilment of the Divine will, for the ultimate good of man even, and for the ultimate extermination of that sin which he himself perhaps originated. We shall fail to grasp the principles which underlie this dramatic picture unless we are taught by it that the fortunes of men possess an absorbing interest for the inhabitants of heaven; that moral problems are being wrought out here unlike any which have been solved there: and that, therefore, they follow the fluctuations of our fate with a divine curiosity and sympathy of which we have but a faint conception. As our struggles are of the profoundest interest to them, so their goodwill or their malevolence tell upon us, and further or delay the issue of the conflict. No, this little human world of ours does not float through space isolated and neglected, unrelated to the vast yet orderly system of the universe. It is attracted by the larger orbs around it and trembles under their perturbations. Good angels and evil angels hold us full in view. We may suffer at times for their sake as well as for our own, even as also at times they bring us a spiritual force beyond our own. For a few brief years man passes across the face of the earth; but above him there bends a broad heaven, not cold and hard and care-

¹ I am indebted for the substance of the rest of this paragraph to a fine passage in Professor A. B. Davidson's Commentary on Job, though I have ventured to condense and vary the expression.

less, but full of tender love and eager ministries ; and beneath him there yawns a hell, crowded with hostile and malignant spirits who would fain make him as selfish and as miserable as themselves : while above all, and through all, and in all, God reigns and works, compelling even the disasters and defeats of the conflict to minister to the completeness and glory of the final triumph.

Assuredly nothing in this Scene in Heaven is more noble and touching than the pride, so to speak, which God takes in the good man, the confidence He reposes in him. Whether with or without some purpose of mercy even for the Adversary himself, whether or not inviting him to consider Job, the perfect man, that he may also consider himself and "take a thought and mend," Jehovah challenges Satan to consider Job, and how good he is, and how happy in his goodness. The way has been opened for the challenge by Satan's report of himself. "Whence comest thou?" asks Jehovah. And Satan replies, "From hurrying to and fro in the earth, and from pacing up and down in it." According to the Hebrew idiom there is a certain pride and fidelity in the answer ; it implies that he has come from a strict and vigilant discharge of his proper function,—which function has a double aspect, that of rapid and widely-extended inspection, and that of searching and accurate examination. Much of his original glory still clings to him. Obviously, at least to the mind of the man who wrote this Poem,

his form had yet not lost
All her original brightness, nor appeared
Less than archangel ruined.

He mixes with the other "Sons of God" as their peer. He is evidently expected to present himself before the Lord when they do. No one questions his claim to a seat in the celestial Cabinet, not Jehovah Himself. He is addressed as one who has a right to be there. He speaks as one fully conscious of that right, fully conscious, too, that he has faithfully discharged the task assigned him. As we read these Verses, we begin to suspect that there may be more in our Lord's words than meets the eye when He said, *as though describing an event which had just taken place*, "I saw Satan, as lightning, cast

out of heaven ;" that the Adversary had deteriorated through long centuries of baleful activity, sinking into a lower deep than that into which he originally fell.

And yet, when we read on, and learn that the function of the Adversary is to detect the sins and defects of men, that he has no faith in genuine goodness, that he is eager to do men harm and to rob them of the natural comfort and reward of their virtue, we cannot but believe that even now already he has said to himself and his compeers :

But of this be sure,—
 To do aught good never will be our task,
 But ever to do ill our sole delight,
 As being the contrary to his high will
 Whom we resist. If then his providence
 Out of our evil seek to bring forth good,
 Our labour must be to pervert that end,
 And out of good still to find means of evil ;
 Which ofttimes may succeed so as perhaps
 Shall grieve Him.

To find evil in good is the very task to which the Adversary of this Poem devotes himself with zest. He hurries up and down the earth, like a spiritual detective, ever on the watch for signs of guilt. He has scrutinized even the perfect man with eyes which cast the shadows they discover, and has arrived at the conclusion that, devout and pious as the man seems, he is no less guilty than others, no less self-centred and selfish than he himself. When Jehovah calls Job to his mind, and, as it were, defies him to find any blemish in one so sincere and pure, his response is ready. Job has but the show of piety, not piety itself : he has discovered that to fear God and eschew evil is the best policy. Let Jehovah but put forth his hand and *touch*, *i.e.* smite, him, and he will disown, or renounce, God *to his face*, *i.e.* openly, shamelessly, insolently. As yet God has set a hedge, or fence, round all that he has, warding off all hostile attack and harmful influence. Who would not serve so liberal and munificent a Lord, and observe even the austere forms of piety, to become the greatest and richest of the Sons of the East ?

Here, then, the true problem of the Book is fairly raised. Does Job serve God *for nought*, *without good reason* ? is he

capable of a disinterested goodness, an unselfish virtue? is the very question to be discussed and decided. In so far as it is a question between Jehovah and Satan it is speedily decided. "Job is good," affirms the Adversary, "only because of what he gains by it. Take away his gains, and he will fling his goodness after it." "Will he so?" replies Jehovah. "Take away his gains, then, and let us see whether his goodness goes with or after them." Two sharp and decisive conflicts suffice to determine the issue of this brief but momentous campaign. In the first, Job's person is reserved from the power of the Enemy, and only his possessions are exposed to it. In the second, his life is reserved, but his person, his health, is exposed. And from this careful and exact limitation of the power of the Adversary we can hardly draw a lesser inference than this: That to the incursions of evil, as to the encroachments of the sea, God has set a bar and gates, and said, "Thus far mayest thou come, but no farther." It implies that good is before evil, and superior to it—at once more universal and more enduring; that "all things ill" are subservient to good, and will but swell the volume of its final triumph.

The first conflict and its issue are recorded in Verses 13-22. It is impossible to read them without being struck by the immense range of power committed to the hands of the Adversary; or without suspecting that, by the permission of God, the prince of this world, who is also "the prince of the powers of the air," may have far more to do both with what seems to us the frequent cruelty of the great forces of Nature, and with the still deeper injuries which men often inflict on men, than we sometimes suppose. "A world so full of evils cannot be the work and domain of a Being at once good and almighty," says the modern sceptic, not discerning the good uses to which even evil may be put both here and hereafter. But our Poet is redeemed from such a misgiving by the conviction that evil may, and must, be compelled to lead to greater good. Earth and heaven, man and nature, appear to conspire together against the perfect and upright patriarch the very moment God's "fence" round him, and round his house, and round all that he had, is removed; the lightning and the

whirlwind are turned against him, no less than the cupidity of alien and freebooting tribes :

One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
So fast they follow.

Nor can we well fail to note how the horror grows, how the successive strokes which fall on him gather weight, and break on him with accumulated force. First, the Sabæans swoop down on the oxen and carry them off; then fire flashes from heaven and consumes the sheep, at once more numerous and more widely spread than the oxen; then the still more costly and precious camels are "lifted" by the roving Chasdim; and, finally, the cruellest blow of all, rifling his heart of its most sacred treasures, his goodly sons and daughters are destroyed by "a great wind from beyond the desert." And all these blows are struck in a single day. Each messenger of evil enters on the scene while the previous messenger "was yet speaking;" and each concludes his tale with the pathetic words,—words rendered unspeakably more pathetic by so many repetitions,—"And I am escaped, even I alone, to tell thee." In the morning of one and the selfsame day Job stands before us the greatest, richest, happiest of men, with his children around him, offering his sacrifice and thanksgiving to the God who has loaded him with benefits; and in the evening he lies on the ground, with rent mantle and shaven head, stripped of all, naked as when he came from his mother's womb. To *him*, with his pious habitudes of thought, tracing all events, and in especial all the changes of human life, to the immediate hand of God, it must have seemed that God Himself had turned to be his enemy. To him, indeed, we know it *was* the Lord who had "taken away" all that He had given. And, therefore, it would have been nothing wonderful had Satan prevailed against him, and wrung from his despairing heart an emphatic renunciation of all faith and trust in the Friend who, without cause, had become his Foe.—But we must examine these verses more closely.

Verse 13.—The day on which this terrible and increasing series of calamities fell upon him was the day of the first-born; probably, as we have seen, the very day on the morning of

which Job had "sanctified" his children: and hence the very last day on which he could anticipate that the God whom he had propitiated, and with whom he felt at peace, would so darkly frown upon him.

On *Verse 14* Canon Cook remarks: "It is important to observe that the ploughing determines very precisely the season of the transaction. In the Hauran this takes place in January. This may account for the very frequent allusions to wintry weather,—cold, snow, ice, swollen streams, and violent storms—which occur throughout the Book, a coincidence which has strangely escaped the notice of commentators. It is also to be remarked that all the oxen were at the same time in one district: this too is curiously confirmed by the present custom of the Hauran; in order to protect themselves from marauders the inhabitants plough the land in succession, bringing all their oxen, with their guards, into the same district." An admirable and instructive note except at one main point. The curious "coincidence" which the Commentators have so strangely overlooked is a very questionable one. It fails to make any allowance for the intervals which probably obtained—and these intervals are supposed to have been very considerable—between the first and second trial of Job, between the second trial and the arrival of the Friends, as also for the period consumed in their protracted argument with him. "The very frequent allusions to wintry weather" in the body of the Poem—and they are no more frequent than the similar allusions to summer and autumn—are to be accounted for, I think, not by the assumption that the whole drama was enacted in the month, or months, devoted to ploughing the land, but to the wish and intention of the Poet to paint a complete picture of life in the Hauran through all the changes of the year.

Verse 15.—The Sabæans were an Arabian tribe, of which the northern clans were nomadic, wandering through the whole district between Arabia and the Hauran, and living mainly by plunder; while the southern clans dwelt in settled habitations, devoted themselves to commerce, and sent their caravans through the whole East. (Chap. vi. 18–20.) Strabo says that even the Sabæans of the south, although a rich

mercantile people, made occasional raids for plunder in Petraea and Syria. And as it is likely that Job paid "blackmail" to the clans in his immediate neighbourhood in order to save his lands from their incursions, it is quite possible that his oxen were carried off and their guards slain by the more remote Sabæan clans. The fact that "the young men" of Job were "slain with the edge of the sword" implies that, then as now, the ploughmen of the Hauran were either armed, or protected by armed men, and that these "guards" of his incensed the freebooters by a desperate resistance.

Verse 16.—"A fire of God" (compare 2 Kings i. 10-14) can only mean lightning, I think; and although terrible storms are known in the Hauran, yet a thunder-storm which swept over the vast tracts on which seven thousand sheep found pasture, and which killed them *all*, and their shepherds, would inevitably be regarded as a portent, as the manifest "judgment" of an offended Heaven.

Verse 17.—The *Chasdim*, or Chaldeans, were originally robber hordes. They were probably the descendants of *Chezed*, who, like Uz, was descended from a nephew of Abraham named Nahor. They "retained their old seat and customs down to the time of Xenophon, and are now represented by the Kurds." In forming themselves into "three bands" they simply followed the habit which a little experience and reflection has commended to most freebooting tribes, especially when much ground has to be passed over. Thus divided they would find forage and water more easily; the attack would be more of a surprise and be more likely to cut off all possibility of escape; and the driving away of the cattle they had lifted would be at once more convenient and safer from pursuit than if the whole troop rode together. That robbers from two opposite quarters, the distant South and the distant North, should fall on Job's possessions in a single day deepens our sense of the wide sweep of the calamity which broke so suddenly and destructively upon him. But the mere distance traversed by the hostile tribes presents no difficulty. The Arabs, once mounted and with the prospect of booty before them, care little how far they ride. Even at the present day their incursions often take as wide a range as that of the

Sabæans into the Hauran from Southern Arabia, or that of the "bitter and hasty" Chasdim from the northern plains beyond Babylon.

Verse 18.—It is by comparing this Verse with Verse 13 that we are made sure that the whole series of calamities occurred within the limits of a single day, the day on which Job's "sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in the house of their brother, the first-born."

Verse 19.—The "great wind" was evidently a cyclone, or whirlwind, since it smote "the four corners of the house" at once. We are told that it came from across, or beyond, the desert, in order that we may feel how far it had travelled, and what a mighty and voluminous force it had gathered as it flew. And we may safely assume, I think, that it was part of the same great convulsion in the forces of nature by which the sheep and their shepherds had been destroyed.

With this last overwhelming blow the tragic series comes to a close, at least for the present. The ruin of Job was completed by the third calamity, the "rapture" of his immense stud of camels. But no loss of mere outward possessions wrings a single word of complaint, or apparently a word of any kind, from his lips. With a stoicism and dignity such as many a living Arab sheikh would shew, but also with a pious and cordial acquiescence in the Divine will which only a life of tried and habitual faith can breed, he lets all go without so much as a sigh. It is only when, by the loss of his children, his heart is smitten and torn with an intolerable pang, that he "gives sorrow words." And what words they are! how simple and strong, and how pathetic in their simplicity!

*Naked came I from my mother's womb,
And I shall return thither naked;
The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken:
Blessed be the name of the Lord.*

Under the impulse of deep emotion his words fall into metrical order and rhythm, as all impassioned speech is apt to do. Even the very gestures which express his grief have a certain stately order and self-restraint in them. He rends his mantle, tearing open his wide outer robe from the neck

to the girdle—an act capable, of course, of being done passionately and impatiently; but he also “shaves his head,” an act only to be done deliberately and with care: he does not run wild and deafen heaven with his bootless outcries, like Lear; but with a certain simple and stately dignity he hides his grief under the customary shows of mourning. Nay, more; he “falls on the ground and worships,” prostrating himself in the deepest and most solemn form of adoration known to man: thus silently and unconsciously, and therefore all the more nobly, refuting the charge of the Adversary that, when his gains were gone, he would renounce the God who had ceased to be gracious to him.

And yet how much there was even in this first trial of his constancy to shake and betray it. He knew and felt that this destructive avalanche of loss and misery had not been set in motion by any sin which clamoured against him. He felt, and thought he knew, that it had been hurled on him by God, whom he had done nothing to offend. Both his consciousness of innocence and his conviction that his calamity came from God would render the trial a dark and inexplicable mystery to him. As he reflected on it, the mere sense of loss and dishonour, even his profound and irremediable grief for his children causelessly and prematurely snatched away from him would be less painful than the questions and doubts suggested by so sudden, entire, and causeless a reversal of the usual course of Providence. It must have seemed to him as if the whole world of his established principles and convictions had dropped from under his feet, and he were left floating, *falling*, in a drear and fathomless abyss. But, happily for us and for him, under the most novel and terrible experiences men get the benefit of their past; they reap what they have sown. A life of real trust in God, of real fellowship with Him, connects us with Him by attachments so numerous, and strong, and vital, that no shock of change, no rush of doubt or rebellious passion, can sever them all. Because Job had really lived and walked with God, he could not be wholly sundered from Him, could not altogether lose his trust in Him even when God seemed to be doing him an unmerited and unspeakable wrong. Though his reason, stunned and reeling under so many swift

and heavy blows, lost hold of God, his heart clung to Him, and went groping after Him if haply it might so find Him as to vindicate Him even to the inquisitive and sceptical intellect. And so, for a time, he brushes his doubts and fears aside, and refuses to let his faith be darkened, or more than darkened, by questions he cannot answer. If his head says, "I cannot find God or justify Him," his heart replies, "I am still sure of Him, and *must* trust in Him." Nay, even now already his heart begins to plead for God, and to justify his ways with men. It can say, not only, "Blessed be the Lord, though I do not comprehend Him," but also, "God has a *right* to take away what He has given, even though I can see no reason for his taking it away; the right to give implies the right to withhold or to withdraw." This is not a very profound solution of the difficulty indeed; but it is the deepest and best that Job can reach as yet. It is good so far as it goes, though it does not go very far. But, for the moment, it brought peace to the afflicted patriarch, and the power of worshipping a God he did not understand. And, surely, his noble humility and resignation yield a forcible rebuke to the intellectual narrowness which prompts us to demand that we should comprehend all the ways of Him who has the whole universe on his hands, and to the impatience which prompts us to expect an immediate solution of any problem that painfully affects our life and fate.

There would be no need to add another sentence on the first trial of Job were not this a convenient opportunity for explaining the most difficult word in the whole Prologue. The word translated "blessed" in "Blessed be the name of the Lord" (Verse 21), is the very word which is rendered "renounce," or "curse," in Verse 11. That is to say, it is the very word which Satan had pledged himself to extract from the lips of Job. Now, as Job does use the word, it might seem that the Adversary had triumphed in his conflict with the Almighty. That conclusion, however, is rendered impossible by all the other indications of the Story. And, therefore, we need to remark that the Hebrew verb (*bârak*) is used in a double sense. Usually signifying "to bless," it sometimes

means "to curse." How the same word came to be used in senses so diametrically opposed can only be explained as we recall some well-known facts and laws of human speech.

In general, we may say that, in *many* languages, the word which signifies "bless" also modulates into the very opposite sense of "curse." Some traces of this strange linguistic habit may be found in our own familiar talk, as when we say, lightly or angrily, "Oh, *bless* you!" meaning the exact opposite of what we say. And, perhaps, the explanation of this fact may be that all men, and especially the Orientals, shrink a little superstitiously from soiling their lips with words of evil omen and import, words of direct cursing, and prefer to express their anger and ill-will in words capable of a double sense. Many among ourselves who very willingly equivocate with an euphemism would recoil with horror from breaking out into open imprecations. Charles Lamb has pointed out a cognate fact, or habit, in the use of impassioned language in the lively lines in which he speaks of the—

Irony and feign'd abuse
Such as perplex'd lovers use,
At a need, when in despair
To paint forth their fairest fair,
Or in part but to express
That exceeding comeliness
Which their fancies doth so strike,
They borrow language of dislike,
And, instead of Dearest Miss,
Jewel, Honey, Sweetheart, Bliss,
And those forms of old admiring,
Call her Cockatrice and Siren,
Basilisk, and all that's evil,
Witch, Hyena, Mermaid, Devil,
Ethiop, Wench, and Blackamoor,
Monkey, Ape, and twenty more;
Friendly Traitor, loving Foe,—
Not that she is truly so,
But no other way they know
A contentment to express,
Borders so upon excess,
That they do not rightly wot
Whether it be pain or not.

And hatred is only less ingenious than love, and is very

capable of converting words and formulas of benediction to its own evil and malignant use.

More particularly, we may say of this Hebrew word that its original meaning is "to bend the knee," to kneel in prayer, for example: so that it would easily lend itself to a double and ambiguous sense, since if men kneel when they implore a blessing, they may also kneel to invoke a solemn and deliberate curse.

But, most probably, the full explanation of the word as used in this Prologue is to be found in the fact that the subjects and courtiers of ancient Eastern princes knelt to them, not only when they entered their presence, but also when they left it, even though they left it in anger and cherishing treasonable designs against them in their hearts. Hence the word for "kneel" came easily and naturally to contain the double meaning of saluting a person, especially a superior, both on meeting him and in parting with him, both on giving him up or renouncing him, and on welcoming him and wishing him good speed. We can hardly suppose that even the Adversary thought to drive Job to an extremity in which, like an angry drab, he would "unpack his heart with words" of cursing and blasphemy; still less can we suppose Job to have suspected his sons (for the same word is used, Chap. i. 5) of a sin so exceptional and so alien to all the habits in which they had been nurtured: but Job may well have feared that his sons, in their mirth and gaiety, would "take leave" of God, forget Him, renounce Him, by preferring their own ways to His, by taking "the primrose path of dalliance" rather than "the steep and thorny way to heaven;" and Satan may easily have persuaded himself that, when Job was stripped of all he had gained by serving God, he would revolt from his service, and at least tacitly renounce Him. But his hope is defeated. Job does, indeed, utter the very word that Satan had set himself to force from his lips, but he uses it in the good sense, not in the bad, in the very opposite sense, that is, to that in which the Adversary had predicted he would use it. So far from "taking leave" of God, or renouncing Him, he flies *to* God, not *from* Him, and renews his homage.

“In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God with wrong.”

THE Second Trial of Job was probably divided from the First by a considerable interval. The Targum places a full year between them; other authorities place a month: neither the one assumption nor the other, however, has any more solid foundation than the conjecture that the Poet conceived of the heavenly Cabinet as meeting at stated and regular intervals. But though we cannot pretend to determine dates, it is surely reasonable to infer from what we know of the moral history and experience of man that the first temptation would be allowed time to *work*, to develop its force and bitterness, to accumulate its full weight; and that the heart of Job, rocking to and fro under so amazing a stress of misfortune, would be long before it regained its poise, and so far adjusted itself to its new condition as to be able to say,—

*Jehovah gave, and Jehovah hath taken ;
Blessed be the name of Jehovah.*

Whatever the interval, we may be sure that the second temptation came soon enough; for, in some respects, it was far more searching and penetrating than the first. Mere physical health does more to sustain the spirit than we suspect until our health is seriously impaired. The calamities which had already befallen Job were only too likely to expose him to the suspicion and scorn of the tribes, as a man smitten by God for his sins; but it was barely possible that they might see unparalleled misfortune in them rather than unparalleled guilt. When, however, the very person of Job was invaded by a rare and monstrous form of disease, which made him loathsome to all who saw him as well as to himself, his monstrous guilt would be assumed as past all doubt. And, in any case, the loss of health was an *additional* trial; it came on the back of all other losses, all other causes for wonder, and sorrow, and resentment. If, in this second trial, God's eulogy of the afflicted Patriarch is warmer and his pity for him more profound, on the other hand, the malignity of Satan is sharpened against him by a sense of failure, and he strikes, the very moment he gets permission, with his utmost force.

This Trial is recorded in Chapter ii., Verses 1-10.

Verses 1-3 are, for the most part, a repetition of Chapter i. Verses 6-8, and call for little remark. But it should be observed that Verse 3 ends with a new phrase, in which Jehovah complains, with a touch of indignant reproach, of the malice of Satan in instigating Him to afflict Job "without cause," and speaks of his faithful servant with even more than his former love and pride. Satan had affirmed that the integrity of Job was bound up with his gains, and that when the gains were taken away he would fling his integrity after them. And, now, Jehovah calls on the Adversary to mark, and to confess, that, although all that he had has been taken away from this perfect man, "he still holds fast his integrity," his whole-hearted devotion to God, and will not let it go.

Here already, then, the professed zeal of Satan for the honour of God is detected and exposed. He had affected to believe that Job was imposing on the generous credulity of Jehovah, and to be indignant that the imposture should succeed. But now, in that "thou didst move me against him *without cause*"—a phrase in which a rueful pity for the sufferings of his servant and pride in his constancy are strangely blended—the real hypocrite is unmasked. It was not the honour of the King of Heaven for which Satan was eager, but the destruction and disgrace of the perfect man whose disinterested fidelity was a standing rebuke to his own infidelity and selfishness. The charge alleged against Job had been proved to be untrue, and therefore it recoiled on the head of him who had advanced it.

Verse 4.—This challenge to confess his malice only exasperated the malice of Satan. He had been content before to charge Job with impiety; now he charges him also with utter inhumanity. He implies that Job really cared for no one but himself, not even for his sons and daughters; and that so long as he walked in a whole skin the genuine nature of the man would never be revealed. The proverb in which this atrocious insinuation is conveyed—as if the very devil himself were a little ashamed of it, and did not choose to be considered the author of it—"Satan's *old saw*," as Browning, with the quick insight of a poet, calls it, has long been dis-

cussed by scholars; but as yet they are able to agree only in its general import: and *that*, by the way, is determined for them by the context. "A skin for a skin" (or, as it might be even more literally rendered, "*Skin for skin*, and all that a man hath, he will give for his life") bears some resemblance, however, to other proverbs which may help us to explain it. Thus, for example, the Jews have a saying, "*One gives one's skin to save one's skin—i.e. gives a part to save the rest, 'but all to save one's life,'*" which very closely resembles that here quoted. Possibly, "A skin for a skin," in the sense of "A hide for a hide," was an Arab proverb in the time of Job, familiar to the lips of their traders, and was used by the *literati* to point the selfishness of men who only give when they expect to receive a full equivalent. Perhaps, "*Give a hide to catch a hide*" would convey its sense to an English ear; or the rural proverb, "Give an apple to him that has an orchard;" or, even the vulgar saying, "Give a sprat to catch a herring." Satan, who, in his self-absorption, can recognize nothing unselfish in the whole round of human motives, meant that Job's piety was purely selfish, a mere barter of one good thing against another and a better; nay, that his very humanity extended only to himself; that he cared little for the loss of his children; that so long as health was left him, if he believed he owed it to God, he would affect to serve Him. "Take away *that*, so that he shall account his very life to be gone from him, and his assumed piety will open and disclose his real and utter selfishness." It is edifying to hear this *pious* devil declaiming on the impiety of man, this *humane* devil, who only longed to do Job harm, declaiming on the inhumanity of man; or, in one word, this *disinterested* devil declaiming on the selfishness of man!

Verses 5, 6.—For the greater good and glory of his servant Job, Jehovah permits even this issue to be raised and tried. Satan is authorized so to "touch" Job that he shall account death better than such a life as his (Chap. vii. 15), in order that the trial may be complete; but he is not allowed to take life itself, in order that, if Job should stand the trial, his faith and patience may receive a due reward.

Verse 7.—The foul disease with which Job was smitten,

and of which he himself details many of the symptoms, was clearly *elephantiasis*, the severest and most terrible form of leprosy. Beginning with "grievous ulcers," it eats, like a cancer, through the whole body, swelling the limbs, especially at the joints, into monstrous lumps, till they resemble the limbs of an elephant (whence its name), and even causing them to rot off piecemeal.

Verse 8.—These ulcers were too loathsome and fetid to be touched. Hence the use of the "potskerd," or piece of broken earthenware, to remove the feculent discharge. Rosenmüller says (*in loco*) that Orientals sometimes used an instrument for this purpose shaped like the hand, and made of ivory.

For "ashes" the Septuagint reads "dung." The two words mean the same thing. It is as correct as it is usual to speak of Job's "dunghill," although that unsavoury word is not once employed either in the Original or in our Authorized Version; for, from many of the allusions of this Story, it is quite certain that we are to conceive of the Patriarch as lying on what "the Sons of the East" call the *mezbele*: this, indeed, is the very scene of the Poem. It is necessary, therefore, that we should learn what the Arabian *mezbele* is like.

Consul Wetzstein (in his valuable contributions to Delitzsch's Commentary on Job) gives an accurate and graphic description of it, from which I select the following sentences: "The dung, which is heaped up there, is not mixed with straw, because in warm dry countries no litter is required for the cattle. It is brought dry, in baskets, to the place before the village, and is generally burned once every month. . . . The ashes remain. . . . If a village has been inhabited for a century, the *mezbele* reaches a height which far surpasses it. The winter rains turn the ash-heap into a compact mass, and gradually change the *mezbele* into a firm mound of earth. . . . It serves the inhabitants of the district as a watch-tower and, on close oppressive evenings, as a place of assembly, because there is a current of air on the height. There the children play about the whole day long; *there the forsaken one lies, who, having been seized by some terrible malady, is not allowed to enter the dwellings of men; by day asking alms of the passers-by, and at night hiding himself among the ashes*

which the sun has warmed. . . . Many a village of the Hauran has lost its original name, and is called *el-mezâbil*, from the size and number of these mounds, which always indicate a primitive and extensive cultivation. . . . And many a more modern village is built upon an ancient *mezbele*, because there is a stronger current of air, which renders the position more healthy." It is on such a mound, or *mezbele*, as this that we are to think of Job as lying when, smitten by "a terrible malady," he was no longer "allowed to enter the dwellings of men."

Verse 9.—Job's wife—the Targum says her name was Dinah, and puts a long and violent harangue into her mouth; feeling it, no doubt, says an unfeeling Commentator, an outrage on nature and propriety that, under the circumstances, "a woman should say so little"—has had hard measure meted out to her. Human characters, indeed, are so wonderfully complex that it is never easy in dealing with them to "judge righteous judgment." And to infer an entire character from a single sentence uttered in a moment of intense excitement, is assuredly very hazardous, and is likely to be very unjust. Yet *this* is the measure which has been meted out to Job's wife, not only in the popular, but also, as a rule, in the scholarly, estimate of her character. For one passionate utterance, because she once spake "as the foolish women," *i.e.* the impious or irreligious women, speak, she has become a byword and a reproach, and figures as a kind of Scriptural Xantippe in the general imagination. That is very unjust. We, who so sorely need charitable construction ourselves, might surely construe her one foolish speech more charitably. There are few, men or women, who could endure to be measured against "the perfect man;" and therefore it is hardly a discredit to his wife if she fell short of him. Who would not? Then, too, she had endured all that he had endured. *She* had been brought to penury and dishonour with him. "The young people" who were killed in the house of the firstborn were *her* children as well as his. And, like him, she had borne the calamities of the first trial without a murmur. Very possibly this second trial was even heavier to her than to him; for to the sensitive womanly nature it is often harder to see

another suffer than to endure suffering, and, on the spur of loving impulse, it often says far more and other than it means. If Job's wife were a woman of the finer sort,—and the wife of such a man, the mother of such children, is likely to have been “a woman nobly planned,”—it must have been far harder for her to see him sitting, stunned and hopeless, on the ash-heap, than to have sat there herself. She might have endured his sufferings, though she could not endure to see him suffer them. And so, in an impulsive, passionate, womanly way, she cries, “Renounce God, and die!”

“A very shocking speech!” Perhaps; but let us remember of what a shock it was the echo, and not scan too severely the words of one half-maddened by an intolerable misery. *God* did not judge her harshly for them; for she too was raised from the dust to share the sevenfold splendour and prosperity of Job, and to bear him sons and daughters.

None the less, however, must her passionate grief and despair have embittered Job's sufferings. The more he loved her, and the more worthy she was of his love, the more keen must have been his anguish at seeing her distraught with resentment, the more perilous must have been the temptation to take her desperate counsel, and to rush out of a world where all things seemed disordered and out of course. So that it makes *for* Job's constancy and patience, not against them, to adopt the nobler rather than the baser conception of his wife.

And, indeed, the more closely we study her words, the more we find in them which denotes intelligence and largeness of soul. Obviously, when she asks, “Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity?” using the very words which Jehovah had used (Verse 3), she had penetrated to the very heart of the question at issue, and saw that Job, in maintaining his righteousness, was exposing himself to ever new trial and affliction. So, again, when she employed the very word (*bârak*) which Satan had set himself to wring from her husband's lips, and which Job had uttered, in its good sense, at the close of the first trial, she may have meant “*Curse* God, and die!” or she may have meant, as I am disposed to think she did, “*Bless* this God of yours again, and you will surely die.” Her meaning may have been, and probably was: “Do

not any longer stand on your righteousness, but confess your sin—confess anything God wants you to confess, say anything He wants you to say, lest you perish. You blessed Him before (Chap. i. 21), and He did but send new disasters upon you; bless Him again, and you will lose all that is left you—life. It is not blessing or praise that He wants of you, but contrition, confession. Give Him whatever he wants, and have done with Him.”

This may have been the sense in which “Dinah” spoke; but even if it were not, even if we put the worst possible construction on her words, is she to be condemned for a single passionate outburst? “Think ye to reprove words!” cries Job to Eliphaz (Chap. vi. 26): “But the words of the desperate are for the wind to blow away.” Should not the words of his wife, then, driven desperate by misery, be left to the winds? He himself, too, afterwards spoke many “wild and whirling words;” yet God did not condemn him for them, but affirmed rather that his servant Job had “spoken of Him aright” (Chap. xlii. 7), despite the outbursts of passion and reproach forced from him by despair and misery. Shall we not, then, make the same generous allowance for his wife?

Verse 10.—Keen as the trial was, Job held fast his integrity. The issue of the second trial resembles that of the first. As before he had recognized God’s right to take away as well as to give, so here he admits it to be man’s duty to accept evil from God as well as good. Neither any hope of good nor any fear of evil will induce him to palter with his own conscience and confess sins of which he is unaware, or to acknowledge that God has dealt unjustly with him, however amazed and perplexed he may be at so wide a departure from the usual method of Providence.

His second victory is announced to us in the words, “In all this Job sinned not with his lips.” “Not *with his lips*, indeed,” insinuates the Targum: “that means he had already begun to sin and murmur *in his heart*.” How *can* men be so hard on men? how can they, as Chaucer puts it, “so gladlie demen to the baser end”? There is not the slightest ground for the insinuation of the Targum. What the phrase really means and suggests is, that not so much as a sinful word was wrung

from Job even under the pressure of so great a misery; that he kept his very lips pure, and, not offending in word, had thereby proved himself to be, according to the standard of St. James (Chap. iii. 2), "a perfect man." His wife had not been able altogether to rule the unruly member; but he had. Sin is not in words only, nor mainly; but in the emotion of which words are but an expression. Had Job sinned *in his heart*, he had sinned indeed.

With the arrival of the three Friends, Job's third and severest trial begins. Up to this point he had maintained a noble humility and resignation under the pressure of doubts which were even more terrible to him than his unparalleled calamities. He himself, indeed, held the very creed held by the Friends, and, had he stood in their place, might have used the very arguments which they used (Chap. xvi. 4, 5). The problem which absorbed and tormented his mind was the self-same problem which they set themselves to solve, and was based on the same axioms or assumptions, but it was capable of two wholly different solutions. Believing, as they did, that all the miseries of life come from the hand of God and are sent to punish men for their sins, the problem over which Job brooded must have taken a double form, as thus: "God afflicts men only for their sins; I am afflicted: and therefore I must have sinned." But this conclusion his good conscience entirely refuses to admit; he is not conscious of sins which clamoured for punishment, and he will not confess sins of which he is unconscious. Inevitably, therefore, he was driven on the other horn of the dilemma: "If I have not sinned, and yet God has afflicted me as though I had sinned heinously and enormously, must not God be unjust?" From this conclusion, too, he shrinks; yet no other is open to him, if once his premisses be granted: and it had never occurred to him to doubt these. And, therefore, he is content for a time to leave the problem unsolved, to dispense with any logical solution of it, to admit that in the providence of God there are mysteries which he cannot comprehend, and to hold, however illogically, both that he himself is righteous and that God is just.

But the Friends are of a more logical turn, as bystanders

are apt to be. They insist on forcing the controversy to a conclusion; nay, insist on Job's assent to that conclusion; and, as they cannot for a moment suspect the justice of God, to question the integrity of Job is the only alternative left them.

So that Job's third and severest trial consists, not in any new bereavement or loss, but in the interpretation put on his former losses and sorrows by the Friends, and, if by his friends, then by all his world. He had now to taste the bitter anguish of finding himself abandoned and condemned by men as well as forsaken by God, of standing alone, with absolutely nothing to back him save his conscience, against the whole world, against the whole universe. Those who have known what it is to enter into conflict with the very forms of thought and faith which they themselves once held, and which are still so firmly held by the men of their generation as that they are at once cut off from all fellowship and sympathy the moment they call them in question, are in some measure able to enter into the anguish which now pierced Job's spirit to the quick. It is no wonder that the solitary man, hearing his own misgivings reflected in forms ever more harsh and offensive from the lips of the Friends, should at times grow well-nigh desperate, and meet their suspicions of his integrity by challenging the justice of God. The only wonder is, that, even in the stress of a conflict so bitter, his heart clave to the God who had grown questionable to his intellect, and insisted on trusting One whom it could no longer comprehend.

But in doing justice to Job, let us not do injustice to the Friends. They were good men. That Job accounted them his friends says much for them. And, indeed, as they disclose themselves to us in their speeches, they say much for themselves. Pious they were, and devout, and even wise in the wisdom of their time. Their grave fault was—and it is a common fault with “the religious”—that they were not looking for more light; that they thought the whole truth was included in the simple and portable creed which they had adopted; that they put dogma above fact.

Many Commentators are enchanted with the delicate strokes and touches by which the Poet has characterized the three Friends, distinguishing one from the other. I must

honestly and sorrowfully confess that I have failed to detect these subtle and delicate strokes, though I have looked for them carefully and often. All I can see of difference in the three men amounts only to this: Eliphaz—probably the oldest and wisest of the Three, with a considerable likeness to Job himself in the general cast of his character and his tone of thought—is of the prophetic order of men; his conclusions and arguments seem to have been framed very largely on oracles and revelations, although, like Bildad, he is also an erudite man and can readily cite the wisdom of the ancients: he has been brought into a closer and more immediate intercourse with Heaven than his fellows, and, like Balaam, another son of the ancient East, he is a seer of visions and a dreamer of dreams. Bildad goes more on tradition, on the gathered and priceless wisdom of the ancients. A much lesser man every way than Eliphaz, with a much more contracted range of thought and sympathy, he deals in proverbs, in citations from the fathers, and takes a severer and more personal tone in addressing Job. But if Eliphaz is the prophet and Bildad the sage of the trio, what shall we say of Zophar? So far as I can read his character in his words, Zophar is the common good man of his day, the vulgar but sincere formalist; the man who thinks what he says will become true if only he says it often enough and forcibly enough; the man who implicitly believes what he has been taught and demands not only that every one else should believe it too, but also that they should accept it in the very forms in which it has commended itself to him, and, above all, that they should refuse to believe anything *more*. He is sharp, and bitter, and hasty in tone, moreover; he puts a coarse tearing edge on the insinuations of his companions; and prided himself, I dare say, on being a plain blunt man, who said what he meant and meant what he said. A dangerous man to differ from, or to outstrip; the kind of man with whom it is of no use to go a mile if you go but a single inch beyond him; the kind of man, too, who is very apt, as Lowell, with humorous exaggeration, says of Carlyle, “to call down fire from heaven whenever he cannot conveniently lay his hand on the match-box.”

These are the three figures which, for me at least, loom

dimly out of the past as I study this Poem ; and if their outlines are not very distinct or wrought out with much subtlety of thought, we can nevertheless see how admirably they would serve the Poet's turn. He was bent, not only on solving the main problem of the Book, but also on depicting the whole world of thought and emotion quickened in the hearts of men as they contemplated the inequalities and apparent inequities of human life ; just as Tennyson, in "In Memoriam," sets himself, not simply to bewail a personal loss, but to express the whole round of thought and emotion to which such a loss as his gives birth. And, therefore, it was necessary that he should bring Job into relation with typical men, men who would say what, on the whole, the entire ancient world would have said. Only thus could he secure that full and comprehensive treatment of his subject which he desired. Accordingly, he selects a prophet, who could bring to the discussion the highest disclosures Heaven had yet made to earth ; a sage, who could pour the light of ancient wisdom on it ; and the ordinary good man, orthodox but creed-bound, formal but sincere, pious but uncharitable, who could contribute to the discussion whatever was to be found in the accepted formulas of the age.

How long an interval elapsed, after the second trial of Job, before the Friends came to comfort him, it is impossible to determine : some conjecture a year ; others, only a few weeks : but we may fairly assume, I think, that, as at the close of the first trial, a considerable period passed, in which Job would be permitted to enter into its full bitterness and adjust himself to his new conditions, before other and profounder miseries were imposed upon him. Indeed, his tone throughout the Poem implies that many months had intervened, months in which his kinsfolk drew back and stood aloof from him, his most inward friends learned to abhor him, and even the "baseborn and base" aborigines of the land, whose sires he had "disdained to rank with the dogs of his flock," had grown bold enough to make him their byword and reproach (Chaps. vii. 3 ; xix. 8-22 ; xxx. 1-15). The fact, too, that his disease had made such havoc with his frame that the three Friends could no longer recognize him when they saw him, points to the same conclusion.

Verse 11.—Esau had a son named Eliphaz; and this Eliphaz had a son named Teman. (Gen. xxxvi. 4, 10, 11.) Possibly the Eliphaz of our Poem was a descendant of Eliphaz the son of Esau; almost certainly the district of Teman took its name from Esau's grandson. This district lay on the north-east of Edom, within easy reach of the Hauran. Its inhabitants were long famed for wisdom throughout the East, and especially for the wisdom which clothes itself in proverbs, parables, and dark oracular sayings. Thus Jeremiah (Chap. xlix. 7) asks concerning Edom: "Is wisdom no more in Teman? is counsel perished from the prudent? is their wisdom poured out?" *i.e.* to the last drop.

Bildad the Shuchite was possibly a descendant of Shuach, the son of Abraham by Keturah (Gen. xxv. 2), who appears to have given his name to a district lying to the east of the Hauran, which is now known as Shakka.

Zophar the Naamathite it is impossible to define or locate. Many places have been called Naamah in Syria and Palestine; but in all probability the home of Zophar was on the other side of the river, *east* of Jordan, and in the vicinity of the Hauran. The Septuagint brings him from Maon (now Maan), a district to the east of Petra, and so makes him close neighbour to Eliphaz. Probably they were all three of them nomadic princes, the sheikhs of wandering clans, with whom Job had become acquainted in his travels, or in his large and varied intercourse with the world.

These three men, when they had heard of all the evil which had befallen him, concerted together to come and condole with him and comfort him,—to pay him, as it were, a state visit; ceremonious visits of condolence being then, as now, a point of good manners in the East.

Verses 12 and 13.—Probably they sought him first at his home, and were there directed to the *mezbele* on which he lay; for, we are told, "they lifted up their eyes *from afar*"—the scene is evidently out of doors—"and knew him not," his person being disfigured and blackened beyond recognition by the ravages of his disease. Amazed by the spectacle of his degradation and misery, now first realizing perhaps how low he had fallen, they gave mute but speaking expression

to their grief and compassion. They rent their mantles; they “sprinkled dust upon their heads to heaven,” *i.e.* caught up dust in their hands, as the Arabs still do, and threw it up into the air so that it fell back on their heads. (Comp. Homer, *Iliad*, xviii. 22.) They “sat down with him on the ground” —sitting on the bare earth being a customary sign of mourning (2 Sam. xii. 16; Jer. iii. 25; Lam. ii. 10); and not unfrequently, in cases of extreme sorrow, the mourning was protracted through “seven days and seven nights:” thus Joseph made “a great and very sore lamentation,” “a mourning for his father seven days” (Gen. l. 10), and the men of Israel for Saul and Jonathan (1 Sam. xxxi. 13). It was also a sign of their intense and mournful sympathy that during these days “none of them spake a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great.” In like manner, Ezekiel, when he first came on his captive brethren by the banks of the Chebar, “sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days” (Ezek. iii. 15). “Among the Jews it is a point of decorum, and one dictated by a fine and true feeling, not to speak to a person in deep affliction until he gives an intimation of a desire to be comforted.” There was more here than the observance of Oriental etiquette, however. Probably the friends, like Ezekiel, were “astonished”—stunned, overwhelmed—with wonder and pity, so that they could not speak. Probably they felt, as we feel, the sanctity of great grief, the impossibility of assuaging it with mere words, the fear of being intrusive, irreverent even, should they open their lips. Probably, too, as they sat silent by his side, they had already begun to ask themselves of what secret sin Job had been guilty that he should have been so sorely smitten by God; perhaps even to ask each other with their eyes what was the hidden flaw in the life of one whom they had accounted perfect.

But whatever their misgivings and suspicions may have been, Job was evidently unconscious of them; he saw nothing but friendly sympathy and compassion in their silence: he assumes that they are wholly with him, that they are on his side and will take his part. And it is one of the finest and most natural touches in the Poem that the man who had

remained silent under the most terrible pressure of misfortune, holding down his unruly thoughts, letting his doubts and questions prey on his heart but refusing to utter them, resolving, like poor Lear,

No, I will be the pattern of all patience;
I will say nothing,

is surprised into utterance by the first show of sympathy and kindness. *Now* his pent up grief and rage and despair break all bounds; for he is confident that his friends understand him, and feel for him, and will lend him a credent and sympathetic ear. Deceived at this point, as he soon discovered that he was, he was "the more deceived;" he felt that the very citadel and sanctuary of his soul had been surprised and betrayed.

SECTION II.
THE CURSE.

CHAPTER III.

THIS Chapter divides itself into three sections, three strophes, in which human life is execrated through its whole course. (1) Job asks (Verses 3-10), since life is so heavy a burden, Why was I born at all? (2) Then he demands (Verses 11-19), if I must be born, why was I not suffered to die as soon as I was born, and sink into the rest and quietness of death? (3) And, finally, if that were too great a boon, why may I not die *now*—now that I am sick of life and long for the tomb? (Verses 20-26.)

CHAPTER III.—*At length Job opened his mouth, and cursed his day.*

2. *And Job answered and said :*

3. *Perish the day wherein I was born,
 And the night that said, A man is conceived !*
4. *That day ! Let it be darkness !
 Let not God ask after it from above,
 Neither let the sun shine upon it !*
5. *Let darkness and the blackness of death reclaim it !
 Let a cloud sink down upon it !
 Let the terrors of the day affright it !*
6. *That night ! May thick darkness seize it !
 Let it not rejoice among the days of the year,
 Nor come into the number of the months !*
7. *Lo, that night ! Let it be barren,
 And let no cry of joy enter it !*
8. *Let those who ban days ban it,
 Who are of skill to rouse the Dragon !*
9. *May the stars of its twilight gather darkness !
 Let it long for light and see none,
 Nor let it behold the eyelids of the dawn,*

10. *Because it shut not up the doors of the womb that bore me,
And hid not trouble from mine eyes !*
11. *Why was I not dead when I came from the womb ?
Why did I not come forth only to expire ?*
12. *Why did knees welcome me,
And why breasts that I might suck ?*
13. *For then should I have been lying still and quiet ;
I had slumbered, and been at rest*
14. *With kings and councillors of the earth
Who built for themselves ruinable sepulchres,*
15. *And with princes, possessed of gold,
Who filled their palaces with silver :*
16. *Or, like a hidden abortion, I had not been,
Like babes who never see the light.*
17. *There the troublers cease from troubling,
And there the strong, worn out, find rest :*
18. *There the prisoners repose together in peace,
They hear no task-master's voice :*
19. *The small and the great are equal there,
And the slave is free from his lord.*
20. *Wherefore is light given to the afflicted,
And life to the bitter in spirit,*
21. *Who long for death, but it cometh not,
And search for it more than for hid treasure,*
22. *Who would rejoice with gladness
And be blithe to find a grave,—*
23. *To a man whose path is hidden,
And whom God hath fenced in ?*
24. *For my groaning cometh like my food,
And my sighs gush out like the waters.*
25. *If I fear a fear, it cometh upon me,
And whatsoever I dread befalleth me.*
26. *I have no quiet, no repose, no rest,
But trouble cometh on trouble.*

The three sections of this Chapter are introduced by a few historical or descriptive words (Verses 1 and 2). Job "*opened his mouth*"—a phrase only used on solemn occasions, and denoting the momentous character of the utterances which followed it; as, for example, when the Lord Jesus "*opened his mouth*" to deliver the Sermon on the Mount (St. Matt. v. 2).

—“*And cursed his day.*” The word here used is not the dubious *bārak* employed in Chapters i. and ii. which, besides intermediate shades of intention, might mean either to bless or to curse; but another verb, which signifies to *execrate* that which is base and worthless. His “day” is, of course, the day of his birth. “*And Job answered and said,*”—answered whom, or what? If the three Friends had as yet spoken no word to him, their manner and gestures had, nevertheless, said so much that he is sure they

Cannot but feel this wrong as ’twere their own.

They had wept, rent their mantles, cast dust on their heads, sat down with him seven days and nights, thus mutely intimating their grief and compassion. Job’s words are his response, his answer, to this unspoken sympathy. Beholding their sorrow and amazement at the mere spectacle of his misery, the sense of his misery comes closer home to him; it gathers new force as he sees it reflected from their eyes: and he breaks out into passionate imprecations on his day.

The First Strophe, like that which follows it, touches points on which it is difficult, almost impossible, to dilate without some offence against modesty. And, therefore, I will only give a brief summary of its contents, and a few explanatory notes.

First of all Job execrates, in general terms, the night of his conception and the day of his birth (Verse 3). Then, more particularly (Verses 4 and 5), he prays that the *day* of his birth may be ever dark as night, forgotten by God, unilluminated by the sun, reclaimed by death as its proper possession, lost in clouds, exposed to all the terrors incident and possible to day. Then, with equal ingenuity and precision, he curses the *night* of his conception (Verses 6–9) May the primal darkness seize upon it and swallow it up, so that it shall be blotted from the calendar and cease to find a place in the glad procession of the year! May it be barren, giving life to nothing, hearing no cry of joy because a child is born in it! May it be accursed, so that, “ever trembling on the verge of dawn,” the dawn may never break upon it! And, finally, in Verse 10, he gives us the sole reason for this tremendous imprecation on it, that it

was the night on which *he* entered on this life of misery and shame.

Verse 4.—"Let not God *ask after it*,"—*i.e.* not so much as miss it when it is gone; let it be *forgotten*, and not only extinct.

Verse 5.—Darkness and black Death are the nearest of kin to that most dark and miserable day. Let them *reclaim* it, then, as, according to Arab and Hebrew law, kinsmen might redeem the inheritance which had fallen into the hands of a stranger. It was a portion of the kingdom of death which had gone astray into the light; let it be recovered, recaptured, and compelled to submit once more to the sway of "chaos and old night." "Let the *terrors of the day* affright it;" literally, the terrors of a day, of *any* day, all the terrors incident or possible to day-time. Probably the main reference is to eclipses, which were supremely terrible to the ancient world.

Verse 6.—The robber Darkness—for here the figure changes—is to *seize* "that night" as his booty, that it may no longer rejoice amid the days of the year. In the Poet's imagination the night does not so much *rejoice* "on account of its own beauty, as to form one of the joyous and triumphant choral troop of nights that come in in harmonious and glittering procession."¹ From that happy company this night is to be expelled.

Verse 8.—"Those who *ban days*" are those who were held to make days unlucky, *dies infausti*. There is a quaint legend which says that at daybreak the Ethiopians curse the sun because it has burned them so black. And some Commentators, misled by this impossible legend, have suggested that the Ethiopians are the ban-ners of days here adjured. Obviously, as the second line of the Verse shews, the allusion is to the ancient Oriental superstition which attached a supra-natural power to the incantations of the sorcerer. It was *he* who was able, in the popular belief, both to ban days and to "*rouse the Dragon*," *i.e.* the heavenly but hostile constellation known to antiquity by that name.

The ancient poets feigned the constellations to have life

¹ Professor Davidson, *in loco*.

and personality, and to be variously related to each other. The fantasy of the poet became the superstition of the vulgar, and drew many legends round it. It was thought, for example that there was a special art, a magical art, of exciting the Dragon, then held to be the enemy of light, to devour the sun and moon, and so for a time at least to pour darkness over the earth. Eclipses were his work, or the work of the magicians who controlled him by their enchantments. The Chinese still hold the superstition of the antique world, and, as an eclipse approaches, seek by wild outcries and the noise of gongs to scare away the Dragon—not with much effect, for all that I could ever hear. Similar superstitions obtain throughout the East to this day, as they did, indeed, throughout the West till a few years ago. Some traces of the belief in good and ill luck, and of the influence of the stars in their courses on the events of the earth, may even yet be detected in our language and habits, and that not only among the rustic and ignorant, but even among men of culture and refinement.

Nor is the almost universal spread of such superstitions to be attributed solely to the vivid imagination of the poets, or to the mere influence of habit and tradition. They have their origin in some of the commonest facts of experience and in some of the profoundest emotions of the heart. Every man is aware, for instance, that on certain days he rises with a temperament wholly in tune with itself and his outward conditions; “his bosom’s lord sits lightly on its throne;” he is vigorous, bold, sanguine, he knows not why; and on such days as these all seems to go well with him: while on other days, and from causes equally recondite, he rises “deject and wretched,” feels beforehand that nothing will prosper with him, and often finds his foreboding miserably fulfilled. Is it any wonder that on these common facts of experience some men, most men even, have built up a superstition of lucky days and unlucky?

Then, too, we are constantly compelled to feel that both in the human and in the natural worlds great forces are at work which we are powerless to withstand; and that if, at times, we are carried by them where we would be, at other times we are carried whither we would not. These forces, which the

ancient world impersonated and clothed in divine forms, enter into and control our life in a thousand ways which we can neither foresee nor regulate. Is it wonderful, then, that men, feeling their dependence on them, have sought to master and control them, and have even persuaded themselves that they *had* acquired a secret and mysterious power over them, so that they could not only read oracles, but affect the course of Nature and give men good fortune or ill ?

Science, moreover, has discovered that the same great forces and laws "run" throughout the physical universe, that the heavenly bodies do therefore exert a vast and manifold influence on the earth. Is it not natural, then, that those who are not content with materialistic theories of the universe, should assume that as force implies will, or spirit, so forces may imply spirits ; that they should people the whole universe with invisible agents and ministers of God, and infer that the powers and principalities of the unseen universe may be touched by the cries of human infirmity and need, and, like the physical forces of Nature, may be rendered adverse or propitious by the attitude we take up toward them ?

It is to such facts and arguments as these that we must attribute the power of astrological superstition in the modern as in the ancient world ; and when we take them into the reckoning, no wise man will confidently or hastily pronounce that there is absolutely no truth in, or behind, them. In the forms they have commonly assumed they are doubtless untrue and injurious ; for, after all, and whatever the powers or forces at work upon him, a man's fate depends on himself and on the attitude he takes toward God, and any belief which lessens the sense of his personal responsibility, or emasculates his will, injures and degrades him. Shakespeare, whose works teem with allusions to the astrological dogmas and mysteries current in his day, saw and rebuked their immorality. In "King Lear" he writes : "This is the excellent foppery of the world, that when we are sick in fortune—*often the surfeit of our own behaviour*—we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars : as if we were villains by necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance ; drunkards, liars, and adulterers by

an enforced obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in by a divine thrusting on." In the form these superstitions assumed in the age of Job, they were assuredly very questionable, to say the least of them. That by his incantations a man can affect the course of Nature and Providence, and bring good or evil fortune to his neighbours, is an incredible and degrading superstition; but that a man may modify the action of natural forces by a scientific knowledge and use of them, every man will admit: while that, by prayer and obedience, we may influence the God who holds the universe in the hollow of his hand, and the ministers of God who execute his will, no Christian can well deny.

That Job heartily believed in the superstition of his day, and thought that men could ban and unban days, rouse and allay the Dragon, is probable enough. That men like Balaam, and the magicians of Egypt, had a real power over the forces of nature and the minds of men, is not altogether improbable. But it does not follow, because the Poet who has delineated Job used astrological terms and figures, that he necessarily accredited the astrological superstition, any more than it follows that Shakespeare believed in it because he is for ever making one or other of his *dramatis personæ* exclaim,—

It is the stars,
The stars above us, govern our conditions;

any more than it follows that we ourselves accept it when we speak of lucky or unlucky days, adverse or propitious influences: or, indeed, any more than, in Verse 9, he himself meant to affirm that the dawn had eyes of flesh, covered with lids of flesh, when he penned the beautiful phrase "eyelids of the dawn."

Verse 9.—This phrase is as natural as it is beautiful. "The long streaming rays of morning light that come from the opening clouds which reveal the sun," have seemed to many imaginative minds like the light of the eyes of day pouring through its opening lids and lashes when it rouses itself from slumber. Thus Sophocles (*Antig.* 103) speaks of "the eyelid of the golden day," and from him probably Milton derived the

exquisite phrase in his "Lycidas,"—"Under the opening eyelids of the morn." The figure is so familiar to the Arabs that their poets use the word "eye" as a synonym of "sun," and describe the flashing of the sun's rays as "the twinkling of the eye."

Verse 10.—"The womb that bore me" is literally "*my womb*," *i.e.* the womb in which I was conceived. Similarly Juvenal (*Sat.* vi. 124), "*Ostenditque tuum, generose Brittanice, ventrem.*"

In the Second Strophe (Verses 11-19) Job bewails his misery in not having died as soon as he was born:—demanding, first, why he was cared for and saved from the merciful hands of death (Verses 11, 12), running over all the chances he had had of escaping the burden of life, and lamenting the mistaken kindness which closed them all against him: and then (Verses 13-19), permitting himself the relief of dwelling on the happy quiet and repose he would have enjoyed had death been granted him. As he pictures to himself the tranquil repose of the dead, his words grow more calm, and subdued and tender; we feel that the man is in love with death, and craves it as the sole good left to him. What, above all, attracts him in it is its restfulness: "There the troublers cease from troubling, the weary find rest; even the prisoner no longer hears the taskmaster's voice, and the slave is at last free from his lord." Exhausted by the excitements of loss, and grief, and never-ending speculations on an inscrutable mystery, he yearns for repose; and, moreover, *he* has a lord, a taskmaster, though he will not name Ilm, who holds him in hard bondage.

Verse 12.—The "knees" are those of the father, on whose knees the new-born infant was laid, that he might acknowledge it for his own.

Verse 14.—"Ruinable sepulchres," literally, "ruins," are in all probability rock-tombs, mausoleums, or even pyramids, which, no doubt, Job had seen in his travels. The Poet shews, and assumes in his hero, an intimate acquaintance with Egypt, such as, indeed, many both of the patriarchs and of the "men of Solomon" must have possessed. And no doubt he selects

the word “ruins” for these mausoleums, partly to remind us of the immense size and solidity of these famous structures, and partly to remind us that even these were perishable and would one day fall into ruins amid the silence of the desert.

Of *Verse 15* the sense is dubious. Two interpretations have found acceptance. (1) Some understand by the “houses” which the princes, possessed of gold, filled with silver, the graves, or “sepulchres,” of the previous Verse; and these quote the innumerable instances in which treasures—coins, jewels, ancient works of art wrought in the nobler metals—have been discovered in ancient tombs. (2) Others, and with these I hold, maintain that there is no need of such a forced interpretation of the words; that what Job intends to convey is simply the enormous luxury in which these princes lived before they saw corruption, and his conviction that in the rest of the grave even they were better off than when they revelled in their sumptuous palaces.

Verse 17.—The word I have rendered “the troublers” means “the wicked,” no doubt, but it is the wicked viewed as *unquiet*, restless, troubled and troubling. “There lies in the word,” says Professor Davidson, “the signature of eternal unrest, like the sea,—a divine comparison (Isa. lvii. 20),—with a continual wild moan and toss about it, in a fever even when asleep, not always openly destructive, but possessing infinite capacities for tumult and destruction.”

In the Third Strophe all his former excitement rushes back on Job, and he breaks out once more into passionate and wild reproach as he feels that even the rest of death is denied him, that the burden of life must still be borne. “Why may I not die *now*?” is the cry of his heart:

Is wretchedness denied that benefit,
To end itself by death?

He will not name God even yet, but, none the less, it is God whom he reproaches. Here, as often elsewhere in the Poem, he substitutes the “euphemistic *He*” for the Divine Name; but, nevertheless, it is God whom he accuses of surfeiting him with a life of which he is sick, of thrusting it upon him when

all he longs for is to be rid of it. At first, his tone is more general (Verse 20): "Why does *He* give light to the afflicted, and life to the bitter in spirit?" But it soon grows more personal; for he himself is "the man whose way is hidden" (Verse 23), who is so bewildered and shut in on every side that he can but take a step or two in any direction before he is brought to a pause. And, at last (Verses 24-26), his tone becomes wholly personal, and he describes his misery in the plainest, simplest, most pathetic words.

Verse 22.—The afflicted, who long for death, would be "blithe to find *a grave*,"—*any* grave: "these men are not particular; any grave will fit, provided they can but get into it."¹

Verse 23.—In the words "whose path is hidden" Job touches the very acme of his misery. That which most appals him is that, to his tear-filled eyes, human life, his own life is "all a muddle;" that he can see no design in it, no aim, no clear and noble intention; that he has for ever to pace the same weary round of speculation, and can find no exit from it: that, whatever the path of inquiry or action on which he sets out, before he has taken more than a few steps he finds a fence across it which he can neither climb nor pass. What is his life worth to him when he can no longer see any worthy end toward which, oppressed with miseries, he may strive, when God has so shut him in on every side that he can find no loophole of escape?

With *Verse 24* we may compare Psalm xlii. 3,—"*My tears have been my meat day and night.*" The two features of Job's grief indicated in this Verse appear to be—(1) its constancy; it is regular as daily bread: and (2) its extent or volume; it is like water, like a broad deep stream. The Vulgate, however, has some authority for its reading or rendering,—"*antequam comedam suspiro.*"

Verse 25.—Gloomy and terrifying apprehensions are one of the most painful symptoms of *elephantiasis*. And Job here asserts that whatever presentiment of evil it bred in him was straightway realized.

Looking back on the Chapter as a whole, we can hardly

¹ Professor Davidson, *in loco*.

fail to be struck with the ingenuity with which the changes are rung on its main theme. So ingenious, indeed, does Job shew himself in enumerating the details of his misery and in imprecating curses upon them, that, at first, we are tempted to think his strain unnatural, artificial. But even a little thought and reading, if we cannot fall back on experience, will convince us that the picture is true to life. Every loving heart is thus ingenious in setting forth the grief occasioned by sorrows which touch it home. It takes a strange, and sometimes a fierce, delight in calling up all circumstances that deepen its sense of loss and swell the current of passionate emotion, in refusing all alleviations, in repelling all hope of relief, in converting any consolations which may be offered it into food for new regrets and a deeper despair. All literature is full, and notably the Greek tragedies, not only of sentiments akin to those of Job, but of equally ingenious and elaborate iterations of them and variations upon them. Sophocles, for example, states in the briefest sharpest form the ruling thoughts of the two first strophes in Job's "curse," and in stating them he does but express a very general sentiment of the ancient heathen world: "*Not to be born is best in every way; once born, by far the better lot is then at once to go back whence we came.*" (Ed. Col. 1225.) For similar expansions and elaborations in the expression of grief, for this long harping on one sad string, we need not go beyond Shakespeare, who, indeed, in more than one of his finest passages, seems to have had this Chapter in his eye. Thus, for instance, in "King John," when Philip announces his pact of peace with England, and declares,—

The yearly course that brings this day about
Shall never see it but a holiday,

Constance replies :

A wicked day, and not a holy day !
What hath this day deserved ? what hath it done,
That it in golden letters should be set
Among the high tides in the calendar ?
Nay, rather turn this day out of the week,
This day of shame, oppression, perjury.

Or, if it must stand still, *let wives with child*
Pray that their burthens may not fall this day,
 Lest that their hopes prodigiously be crossed :
 But¹ on this day let seamen fear no wreck ;
 No bargains break that are not this day made,
This day, all things come to an ill end,
 Yea, faith itself to hollow falsehood change !

The passage is full of echoes from the Curse of Job ; and the line, "Nay, rather turn this day out of the week," is but a paraphrase of the Verse, "Let it not rejoice among the days of the year, nor come into the number of the months."

So, again, when bereft of Arthur, "her fair son," and urged to patience by the King who had betrayed her, Constance breaks out into an invocation of death no less elaborate, though it is much more coarse than that of Job, and plays with the images suggested by her excited fancy in the same lingering detail ;—an invocation, moreover, which can hardly fail to remind us of Job's description of himself as longing for death, and searching for it more than for hid treasure, as one who would be blithe and exceeding glad to find a grave,—

O amiable lovely death !
 Arise forth from the couch of lasting night,
 Thou hate and terror of prosperity,
 And I will kiss thy detestable bones,
 And put my eyeballs in thy vaulty brows,
 And ring these fingers with thy household worms,
 And stop this gap of breath with fulsome dust,
 And be a carrion monster like thyself :
 Come, grin on me, and I will think thou smilest,
 And buss thee as thy wife. Misery's love,
 O come to me !

Of the moral attitude assumed by Job when, at last, he gives his sorrow words, we need only observe that, though he neither lets go his integrity nor renounces God, he is not quite the man who said, "Shall we accept the good from God, and shall we not accept the evil ?" He does not as yet charge God foolishly, indeed ; he still retains so much reverence that he will not even name God, except once, and that passingly. But he indulges in more than one impatient fling at the God whom

¹ "But," i.e. "save," or "except."

he will not openly accuse. He feels that it is God who has condemned him to live when he longs to die, that it is He who has so fenced him in that he cannot stir, cannot even see a path out of his miseries and perplexities. Already, and before the provocations of his Friends drive him so to assert his own righteousness as to impugn the justice of God, we can see that his patience is beginning to give way, that his woe is heavier than he can bear.

SECTION III.

THE FIRST COLLOQUY.

CHAPTERS IV.-XIV.

AT this point we pass into the Poem proper. It opens with three colloquies between Job and his Friends. In form these colloquies closely resemble each other. Each of the three Friends speaks in each of them; Eliphaz first, then Bildad, then Zophar—save in the last colloquy, when Zophar, having nothing more to say, wisely holds his peace: and each of the three is separately answered by Job. But while similar in form, in spirit they differ widely. At the outset the Friends are content to hint their doubts of Job, their suspicion that he has fallen into some secret and heinous sin, in general or ambiguous terms; but, as the argument rolls on, they are irritated by the boldness with which he rebuts their charges and asserts his integrity, and grow ever more candid, and harsh, and angry in their denunciation of his guilt. With fine truth to nature the Poet depicts Job as passing through an entirely opposite process. At first, while they content themselves with hints and “ambiguous givings-out,” with insinuating in general terms that he must have sinned, and set themselves to win him to confession and repentance, he is exasperated beyond all endurance, and challenges the justice both of man and of God; for it is these general charges, these covert and undefined insinuations of some “occulted guilt,” which, because it is impossible to meet them, most of all vex and perturb the soul. But as, in their rising anger, they exchange ambiguous hints for open definite charges, by a fine natural revulsion Job grows ever more calm and reasonable;

for definite charges can be definitely met: why, then, should he any longer vex and distress his spirit? More and more he turns away from the loud foolish outcries of his Friends, and addresses himself to God even when he seems to speak to them. So often as we listen to him, indeed, we must remember that the great controversy is not between him and them, but between him and God. God is even more in his thoughts than they are; and even while answering them he is really expostulating with God.

There is more logic in his replies to his three interlocutors than we commonly suppose; but a logical refutation of their arguments is by no means Job's first aim. What really dominates and engrosses him is the desire to see "the end of the Lord" in so terribly mishandling him. If we would do justice to Job we must stedfastly bear in mind that, behind the three antagonists whom he could see and hear, and who were only too ready to speak, there stood an invisible Opponent who remained obstinately dumb to his most impassioned expostulations and outcries, and from whom he was throughout seeking to compel a response. And, on the other hand, if we would do justice to the Friends, we must remember that, in declaring the doom of the wicked—and on this point they ring an endless series of changes—they had Job in their eye even when they did not choose to name him; that, on the whole and in the main, what they affirm of the retributions which dog the steps of guilt is true: their mistake being that, in the teeth of all the facts of the case, they assume the guilt of Job, having indeed no other basis for their assumption than the logical fallacy, that since the wicked suffer, therefore all who suffer are wicked.

The dogmatic prepossessions of the three Friends, which shape and penetrate all they say, may be reduced to three. First and chiefly, God is just: and therefore the good and ill of human life must be exactly apportioned to demerit and desert—good coming to the good, and evil to the evil. Secondly—and this is a mere corollary of the first—the extraordinary evils which have accumulated on you, Job, prove that *you* must have been guilty of some exceptional and enormous sin, hidden from men perhaps, but known to and

avenged by God. Thirdly—and this was the conclusion to which they were fain to lead him: if you will confess your sin and humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, He will forgive your sin, cleanse you from all unrighteousness, and restore to you the open marks of his goodwill.

In the First Colloquy these dogmas are stated with a certain gentleness and consideration. The Friends disappoint us, indeed, by their lack of sympathy in the sorrows of Job; we find little of that tenderness in them which we have a right to expect from his chosen friends, friends, too, who have travelled far in order to “condole with him and to comfort him;” but we must remember that they too had been grievously disappointed, shocked even. If, when Job opened his mouth, instead of cursing his day and reproaching God with having hidden his path, he had broken out into a penitent confession of sin, or even into a passionate lamentation over his sorrows, the Friends might have been touched to the quick; they might have “quoted him” with better heed and judgment, and have spent themselves in endeavours to console him. But when, instead of acting up to their conception of him and of what was becoming in him, he seemed to brave the wrath of Heaven, and to accuse God Himself of injustice in afflicting him, we can understand how they would feel it to be their first duty to bring him to himself, to convince him of his sin, to win him to repentance. This is what they attempt to do even in the First Colloquy. Some human pity they cannot but feel for a friend maddened with loss and grief; nevertheless they are true to their pious convictions, and let him know that, so far as they can see, he must have sinned before God afflicted him,—as very certainly he had done *since*, in charging God foolishly,—and beg him to acknowledge his sin. They all sing the same song, though with characteristic variations. Eliphaz begins with, “Who ever perished, being innocent? and where have the righteous been cut off? It is only those who plough iniquity and sow mischief that reap it.” (Chap. iv. 7, 8.) Bildad follows with, “God does not spurn the perfect, nor take evildoers by the hand. If thou art pure and upright, then will he wake up in thy behalf, and restore the

habitation of thy righteousness." (Chap. viii. 20, 6.) And Zophar winds up with the assertion, "God knoweth evil men, and seeth iniquity when he seemeth not to regard it"—so that when men see only the punishment, God sees the sin that caused it,—and with an exhortation to him to put away "the iniquity that is in his hand." (Chap. xi. 13, 14.) How Job meets these insinuations and remonstrances, and gains a true logical victory over his Friends in this first encounter, we shall see as we pursue our study. For the present we must confine ourselves to the speech of Eliphaz.

I. ELIPHAZ TO JOB.

As the oldest and wisest of the Three, Eliphaz speaks first. He gives by far the noblest, gentlest, and most artistic expression to the convictions and sentiments which were common to them all. Admitting the sincere piety of Job (Chap. iv. 2-6), he nevertheless affirms that the good and ill of life are proportioned to the deserts of men (Chap. iv. 7-11), and intimates that, even if Job has fallen into no conscious sin, he inherits a sinful and imperfect nature (Chap. iv. 12-21); and that, therefore, instead of yielding to anger and passion (Chap. v. 1-5), since all calamity proceeds from the hand of God, and all deliverance, he should humble himself under that Hand, confess his sin and sue for mercy (Chap. v. 6-16). Should he take his chastening in that spirit, it will prove to be but a correction designed to conduct him to a more confirmed piety and a larger happiness (Chap. v. 17-27).

Some Commentators find much that is harsh and unfeeling in the opening address of Eliphaz; they describe it as "haughty, cold, and heartless;" but I confess I do not see how the theology of that age—a theology, be it remembered, in which Job himself believed as devoutly as his Friends—could well have been stated and applied with more delicacy and consideration. It is not of anything in the speech, I think, that we can fairly complain, but of that which is not in it. In the presence of so great a misery, a little sympathy

would have been worth a good deal of theology. Had Eliphaz, seeing how terribly Job was changed by his great "fight of affliction," insomuch that

nor the exterior nor the inward man
Resembled that it was ;

had he, when he found him even more sadly and terribly changed than it had entered his heart to conceive, insomuch that, when he looked on him, "he knew him not," given free expression to his dismay and grief; had he cried out,

[I would not take this from report; it *is*,
And my heart breaks at it;

had he even, when he heard Job invoke curses on the day that gave him birth, paused to consider what it was that put his friend so much from the understanding of himself, his thoughtful and tender sympathy might have saved Job from many a pang. It was not friendly of him to fall at once to *moralizing* on Job's condition instead of seeking to assuage his grief; nor was it friendly of him to pass by, without a word of recognition, the piety, the heroic resignation, which Job had shewn under his earlier afflictions in order that he might rebuke the impatience and despair of "the curse" which had at last been wrung from his anguish. But, with this exception, there is little to censure, in the speech of Eliphaz, much to commend and admire; if he *must* moralize rather than sympathize, it is hard to see how his moralizing could have been more gently done.

CHAPTERS IV. AND V.

CHAP. IV. 1.—*Then answered Eliphaz the Temanite and said :*

2. *Wilt thou faint should one venture a word with thee ?
 But who can refrain from speaking ?*
3. *Lo, thou hast admonished many,
 And hast strengthened many languid hands ;*
4. *Thy words have upholden him that stumbled,
 And reknit the sinking knees :*
5. *But now it has come upon thee, and thou faintest ;
 It toucheth thee home, and thou art dismayed.*
6. *Should not thy piety be thy confidence,
 And as for thy hope, should it not be in the uprightness of thy ways ?*

7. *Think thee, now : who ever perished, being innocent,
And where have the upright been cut off ?*
8. *As I have seen, they who plow iniquity
And sow mischief, reap it ;*
9. *At the breath of God they perish,
At the blast of his nostrils are they consumed :*
10. *The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the swarthy lion,
And the teeth of the young lion, are broken ;*
11. *The strong lion roameth for lack of prey,
And the whelps of the lioness are scattered abroad.*
12. *Now an oracle stole on me in secret,
And mine ear caught its whisper.*
13. *Amid thoughts, from visions of the night,
When deep sleep falleth on men,*
14. *A fear came on me, and trembling
Which made all my bones to quake.*
15. *Then a wind swept over my face,
The hair of my head bristled up.*
16. *There It stood ; but its form I could not discern :
A Shape was before mine eyes :
A gentle murmur—and I heard a voice—*
17. *“ Shall mortal man be more just than God ?
Shall a man be more pure than his Maker ?*
18. *Behold, He trusteth not his ministers,
And chargeth his angels with frailty :*
19. *How much more those who dwell in houses of clay,
Whose origin is in the dust,
Who are sooner crushed than the moth ?*
20. *From dawn to dusk are they cut off,
They are ever perishing unheeded :
Is not their tent-cord torn away ?
They die, but not in wisdom ! ”*

СПАР. V. 1.—*Plead now : is there any who will respond to thee ?
And to which of the Holy Ones wilt thou turn ?*

2. *Nay, passion will slay the impious,
And indignation destroy the foolish.*
3. *I myself have seen a fool taking root,
But on the instant I cursed his habitation :—*
4. *“ His children shall be far from succour ;
They shall crush each other in the gate
With none to deliver :*
5. *While the starveling shall eat his harvest,*

- And snatch it even from within a hedge of thorns,
And the snare shall gape for their substance."*
6. *For calamity cometh not forth from the dust,
Nor doth trouble spring out of the ground ;*
7. *But man is born to trouble
As the sparks fly upward.*
8. *But I, I would have recourse unto God,
And to God would I make my appeal,*
9. *Who doeth great things past finding out,
And wonders that cannot be numbered ;*
10. *Who giveth rain upon the face of the earth,
And causeth water-springs to flow over the fields ;*
11. *Setting those that be low on high,
And lifting up them that are cast down ;*
12. *Frustrating the devices of the crafty,
So that their hands do nothing to purpose ;*
13. *Catching the crafty in their craft,
So that the counsel of the subtle becometh foolhardy,*
14. *And in the daytime they fumble in darkness,
And in the blaze of noon they grope as if it were night ;—*
15. *Thus He saveth the poor from the sword of their mouth,
And the needy from the hand of their violence,*
16. *So that hope ariseth on the feeble,
And iniquity closeth her mouth.*
17. *Lo, happy is the man whom God correcteth !
Therefore spurn not thou the chastening of the Almighty :*
18. *For He maketh sore, yet bindeth up,
He bruisseth, but his hands make whole ;*
19. *In six troubles will He deliver thee,
Nor in seven shall evil touch thee ;*
20. *In famine He will ransom thee from death,
And in war from the stroke of the sword ;*
21. *When the tongue scourgeth thou shalt be hid,
Nor shalt thou fear when destruction cometh ;*
22. *Thou shalt laugh at destruction and famine,
Nor fear the wild beasts of the field ;*
23. *For even with the stones of the field shalt thou be in league,
And the wild beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee,*
24. *So that thou shalt know that it is well with thy tent,
And shalt muster thy cattle and miss none :*
25. *Thou shalt know also that thy seed will be many,
And thine offspring like the grass of the land :*
26. *Thou shalt go to the grave in a ripe old age,*

As the shock of corn is carried in in its season.

27. *Lo, this we have sought out ; it is even thus :
Hear it, and know it, for thy good.*

Eliphaz opens (*Chapter iv., Verse 2*) with an apology for so much as speaking at all to one in such violent and overwhelming distress of spirit. Nothing but a sense of duty to God—nay, even to Job himself—induced him to venture on admonishing him.

But (*Verses 3-5*), if he may venture to speak, he cannot but express his wonder and regret that a man so wise, of such admirable self-control, who has himself comforted so many stricken souls and given strength to so many that were weak, should lose his composure and be dismayed now that he himself has to bear chastisement.

It is very unjust to Eliphaz to assume a tone of sarcasm in his words ; to conceive of him as implying, "It was much easier for you to speak patience than it is to shew it," as though he thought Job one of those who

Can counsel and speak comfort to that grief
Which they themselves not feel ; but, tasting it,
Their counsel turns to passion.

It is more reasonable, as well as more just, to assume that he was honestly surprised and concerned to find one who had habitually shewn so much insight into the purpose and function of suffering, who had been able so to bring out the sweet uses of adversity as to carry consolation and strength to many fainting hearts, unable any longer to "make a push at chance and sufferance" for himself.

It is equally unreasonable and unfair to import a sinister meaning into the argument of *Verses 6-9* ; to take them as conveying, "The innocent never perish ; you are perishing : and therefore you are not innocent." The aim of Eliphaz is to rebuke the impatience of Job, to win him to submission. And, therefore, his argument here is :—The pious and upright are never cut off ; you are pious and upright : why so down-cast and despairing, then ? why do you not make your piety your confidence ? and as for your hope, for which you think you no longer have any ground, here is solid ground for it—in

the uprightness of your ways. To strengthen his argument (1) he states it both in a positive and in a negative form, and (2) both appeals to Job's experience and adduces his own. (1) The upright do *not* perish; the wicked *do* perish. (2) Have *you* ever seen an upright man perish? As for me, *I* have often seen the wicked perish.

The phrase "they who plow iniquity" (in *Verse 8*) is an abbreviated and incomplete expression for "they who plow in the field of unrighteousness;" and the whole *Verse* expresses the inevitable result of an evil life in a proverbial and picturesque form which is of frequent recurrence in Holy Writ.¹ *Verse 9* is exegetical of *Verse 8*. It defines *what* they reap who plough in the field of iniquity and sow mischief in it, viz. destruction: "they perish," "they are consumed;" and it affirms that this connection of destruction with iniquity is not only a law enacted by God, but also a law executed by God:

*They perish at the breath of God,
At the blast of his nostrils are they consumed.*

Verses 10 and 11, which often perplex the simple, who cannot see by what law of association the "lions" are brought in here, are a new and elaborate illustration of the sentiment expressed in *Verses 8 and 9*. The lion is frequently used in the Old Testament, and notably in the Hebrew poetry of this period (*Psalms* xxii. 13; xxxiv. 10; xxxv. 17), as an image of the sinner, especially when the sinner is in great power and abuses it. He is so used here. Under this familiar and carefully wrought out figure, Eliphaz asserts that wickedness, in every stage of its development, and markedly when it is cruel and despotic, conducts to ruin and destruction. Even the greatest and most potent sinners, here represented by the most formidable of beasts, perish before the Divine anger.

The *Verses* are still more remarkable on another ground. In the Original five different words are used for the lion (*ari*, *shachal*, *kephir*, *layish*, *labi*), indicative of the several stages of his growth, which we are obliged to render with such

¹ Comp. *Prov.* xxii. 8; *Hosea* viii. 7; and *Galatians* vi. 7, 8.

epithets as "*young lion*," "*swarthy lion*," &c., in order to convey the meaning of the Hebrew substantives. Obviously the Poet has set himself the task of including all these five names in his Verse, just as some of the Psalmists set themselves the more difficult task of using the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet as the initial letters of the successive verses in their psalms. And this is but the first example of many similar artistic feats which our Poet took delight in accomplishing. As we proceed, we shall meet them again and again.

In *Verses 12-21* we have the most ancient, the finest and most impressive, description of a spiritual apparition ever penned. We can well believe that Eliphaz recited it "with solemn tone and sinking voice." The details of the scene are marvellously selected and combined with the view to produce in the reader that profound sense of awe and terror which is occasioned by immediate contact with the invisible world. It was in the dead hour of midnight, when the wakeful and reflective soul turns to the loftiest themes of meditation, that Eliphaz was brooding over the apparent inequalities of human life, and searching for a vindication of them. He had slept and dreamed; deep "thoughts"—"*dubitations*"—had been excited in him by visions of the night; and, as his mind wandered "in endless mazes lost," that vague terror fell on him, that shuddering presentiment of a more than mortal presence near or at hand, which most of us have felt at times, and which is the most thrilling and paralyzing experience known to men. Then "a wind swept over his face," that terrible chill which turns even the firmest strength to utter weakness;¹ "each particular hair" of his head shivered, "stiffened," bristled up as though recognizing an unearthly visitant; and he became aware, as he lay trembling on his couch, of a spiritual Presence. The terms in which he describes it are the most vague and indefinite, the impersonal touches of the description being wonderfully impressive:

¹ Among the ancients, a cold wind was a recognized adjunct of a supernatural visitation.

There *It* stood : but its form I could not define ;
A Shape was before mine eyes ;
 A gentle murmur : a lull : and I heard a Voice.

Nothing could be finer than this Form which yet form had none, which remained shapeless and undistinguishable, not to be resolved into distinct features by any straining of the eye or the mind ; and this small still voice, audible indeed, but audible only to the inner sense. And, no doubt, it suggested one of the finest passages in Milton's description of Death :

If shape it could be called that shape had none
 Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb ;
 Or substance might be called that shadow seemed.

The Spirit so grandly described brings an answer to the question which had held the soul of Eliphaz waking, viz., What mean the inequalities of human life ? and, especially, why do the good suffer like other men ? But the only answer It has to give is, that every man is sinful by nature, has evil in him, however it may be veiled and controlled and subdued ; so that no man can be just and pure before his Maker. Much less can he be *more* just than God, although he affects to be so when he arraigns the providence of God, and assumes that *he* would have made a more equal distribution of the good and ill of human life. Even the angels are not wholly free from frailty ;¹ God, who alone is absolutely pure, can see possibilities of imperfection even in them, so that He cannot commit Himself to them. How much less, then, can men be pure and perfect in his sight—men who “ dwell in houses of clay,” who are related to the dust from which they spring, and who, by their “ clay ” are laid open to all the evils of flesh and earth ? These poor *ephemeræ*, whose life is but a day, or a few hours of the day, who perish momentarily in the stream from which they rise, and who yet sport out their brief span as though they were to live for ever, what are these as compared with the almighty and eternal Lord ?

The last sentence (*Verse 21*) of this oracular utterance has

¹ “ Frailty,” that is, the liability to err. The Hebrew word is used nowhere else, and, as Dillmann has shewn, is probably derived from an Æthiopic root.

been variously interpreted. Conant, Davidson, and many more, render it,—

Is not their *excellency* taken away ?

but Gesenius, Delitzsch, with other great critics, prefer the rendering,—

Is not their *tent-cord* taken away ?

Read thus, the thought seems to be that when the soul, which holds up and sustains the body as the cord holds up the tent, is required of men, they perish ; but “not in wisdom,” since, like the ephemerids, they have taken no thought of the frailty and perishableness of their nature, the brevity of their span.

On the whole we may say of this graphically described vision that “Eliphaz seems to represent himself, and doubtless with truth, as having been once beset by doubts which were cleared up by a revelation so dim and mysterious in its form as to be scarcely distinguishable from the inner movements of his consciousness.” And, doubtless, he cited this oracle, not simply because it was one of the most memorable and impressive facts in his experience, but partly because he was a man of the prophetic order, to whom visions and revelations from Heaven were a surer testimony than any discourse of reason ; and, still more, because he thought that, in his assumption of integrity, Job was forgetting how frail and sinful he was by nature, and wished to put him in remembrance of it. At the same time there is an obvious delicacy in the manner and spirit of his admonition. Instead of launching a direct admonition against Job, he recounts the vision in which the frailty of universal man had been so solemnly impressed on his mind, and implies that even if Job *had* fallen into some secret sin, he had but shewn a weakness common to all who “wear flesh about them.”

Like one who was conversant with the secrets of the spiritual world, Eliphaz follows up the words of the oracle (in *Chapter v. Verse 1*) by adjuring Job to appeal to any of the spirits or angels, around the throne of God, and see for himself whether they will respond to his appeal and espouse his cause.

It may be feared that Job was not so profoundly impressed by the oracle, or vision, as Eliphaz expected him to be. For here (at *Verse 2*) something in his manner seems to arrest the attention of Eliphaz,—to change and irritate the current of his thoughts. It may be that Job indulged himself in some passionate despairing gesture at this point. It may be that he meant nothing more by his gesture than to express his entire agreement with the affirmation that none of the angels would be at all likely to take his part against God; or to intimate that he was by no means craving an impossible victory over God, but to understand Him and be reconciled to Him. Whatever he meant, Eliphaz seems to have misconceived him, and to have taken the interruption in dudgeon; for, with a sudden break in the sequence of his thoughts, he exclaims: "Nay, do not give way to passion and indignation, as the wicked do, for I have seen them, and marked both their course and their end." And then (in *Verses 3-5*) he proceeds to depict a fool, a moral fool, *i.e.* the sort of fool who says in his heart, "There is no God"—a fool whom he once saw; and to describe how, the moment he apprehended what the man was, he was able to predict his fate. *Verses 4 and 5* probably give the *ipsissima verba* of this prediction or curse. What Eliphaz foresaw was that the fool, though for the moment in great prosperity and spreading himself like a green bay-tree, would come to sudden and utter ruin; his children, unsuccoured by friend or kinsman, would "*crush each other in the gate,*" *i.e.*, ruin one another by feuds and suits brought before the judges who sat in the gate of the city; his homestead would be deserted, his property unprotected, so that the famished starvelings who prowled about it, emboldened by so many signs of neglect and ruin, would venture to break through the hedge of thorns that defended the stacks, and carry off whatever they cared to take. All the wealth of the fool and his family would suddenly disappear, as though some huge trap, which had long gaped for it, had swallowed it in an instant.¹

¹ Verse 5, "And *the snare* shall gape for their substance." Umbreit and Ewald prefer the rendering of the Ancient Version, "*The thirsty* shall snatch at their substance." And "*the thirsty*" makes so good an apposition with "*the starveling*" of the previous line, that one would like to retain it. It

At Verse 6 Eliphaz resumes, and in a milder tone, the general course of his argument, working up into it, however, the little episode of Verses 2-5. He had been arguing that man is by nature frail and sinful, and that therefore Job should humble himself before God, instead of proudly asserting his integrity. And, now, he once more affirms that there is that "born" in man which exposes him to the "trouble" which is the invariable result of sin, the appointed discipline of a weak and sinful nature. But he does not forget and drop the fool whom, and whose end, he once saw. All that sudden ruin which befell him was to have been expected, implies Eliphaz; for trouble is the consequence of sin, and if men will sin they must take the consequence. So that both his lines of thought coalesce in this Verse, which throws one of the common and Divine facts of life into a proverbial form. Misfortune, he says, is not a weed springing at haphazard from the soil of life; it is part of the divine order of the world. It is just as truly in the natural order of things (Verse 7) as that sparks—literally, "*the sons of fire*"—should spring upward. Again we may note the apologetic tone of this pious Temanite. He believes that Job's sufferings spring from his sins, conscious or unconscious; but he admits the universal tendency of human nature to such sins, its universal liability, therefore, to such sufferings. So far from wishing, at least for the present, to make Job out a sinner above other men, he endeavours so to set forth the sinfulness of all other men as to make it easy for Job to confess his sins and seek the Divine forgiveness.

This is the course which he himself would take were his soul in the stead of Job's, as he tells us in Verses 8-16. Job's only direct reference to God had been a complaint (Chap. iii. 23) that God had fenced him in so that he could find no outlet for his thoughts or his activities. "*That*," responds Eliphaz, "is not the right attitude for the sufferer to assume toward God; it is not the course which I myself would take."

is impossible, however, to do so without substituting mere conjecture for criticism, without altering the pointing of the Hebrew, without what Professor Davidson calls "violent vocalic changes" in the teeth of all authority.

God is not only just, but kind; and therefore, instead of impugning his justice, the afflicted should appeal to his compassion. The character of God is to be inferred from all forms of his activity, and, notably, from his doings in the inanimate world of nature and in the world of animate and reasonable men. In the natural world He doeth things great and inscrutable, wonders past finding out: sending rain, for example—rain being the chief of blessings, and the type of all other blessings, to an Oriental mind. In this material sphere his way is manifold, complex, mysterious; but it all tends to a single end, viz., “to set up on high them that be low and to lift up them that are cast down” (*Verses 9–11*). In the human world the energy of God has to contend with the passions, the cunning devices, the follies and fool-hardy oppositions of men; but here also his various lines of action converge on one point, viz., to bring help to the feeble and to stop the mouth of iniquity (*Verses 12–16*).

The right attitude of the sufferer toward God (*Verses 17–27*) is, therefore, one of grateful acquiescence. Since the whole course of his providence is designed to save the poor and the afflicted, since, moreover, the design of affliction itself is to quicken in them a sense of sins of which they were before unconscious, and to lead them to a more complete fellowship with Him, “happy is the man whom God correcteth.” God has no pleasure in afflicting the children of men. He only wounds that He may heal, only exposes them to dangers which they cannot confront alone that, feeling their need of Him, they may run into Him and be safe. The man who is at one with Him—and suffering tends to bring us to Him and unite us with Him—will find all things working together for his good, all the forces of Nature enlisted on his side, even to the stones of the field which obstruct the plough, and the wild beasts which harry the flocks and herds.¹ If Job will but take this attitude toward God, all

¹ The sentiment of Verse 23 sounds like an extravagant hyperbole to many readers. How natural it nevertheless is, and consonant even to the reason of man, may be seen by a careful study of any of our greater poets. It is to be found, for example, in one of our most recent poems,—Mr. Swin-

his outward and painful conditions will be reversed ; instead of lying homeless, childless, stripped, dying, on the *mezbele*, he shall abide securely in his tent, with flocks and herds undiminished by the stroke of Heaven or the rapacity of man, his offspring numerous and flourishing as the grass of the land, and shall only go to his grave in a ripe old age, "frosty, but kindly."

There is only one allusion in these Verses which calls for explanation. In *Verse 26*, "the shock of corn carried *in*," is, literally, "the shock of corn carried *up*;" the Hebrew verb points to the *raising* of the sheaves on to the lofty threshing-floor, which marks the close of harvest. On this verse Canon Cook quotes for comparison the noble lines from "*Paradise Lost*":

So mayest thou live, till, like ripe fruits, thou drop
Into thy mother's lap ; or be with ease
Gathered, not harshly plucked ; for death mature.

These, then, are the general truths and convictions which Eliphaz would have Job apply to his own case. And when we have carefully considered them we shall find in them, I think, no coldness, no sarcasm, no heartless attempt to censure and condemn Job, but a genuine endeavour to "admonish" him, as he himself had admonished many, to strengthen his languid hands and to reknit his sinking knees.

2. JOB TO ELIPHAZ.

CHAPTERS VI. AND VII.

There is, as I have already said, far more of logic in Job's replies to the arguments and reproaches of the Friends than burne's "*Erechtheus*." In the fine lines put into the lips of the goddess Athene, we read :

Time and change,
Masters and lords of all men, shall be made
To thee that knowest no master and no lord
Servants ; *the days that lighten heaven and nights*
That darken shall be ministers of thine,
To attend upon thy glory.

is commonly discerned in them. We must not, however, expect from an ancient Oriental the dialectical forms and subtleties of the modern schools of the West. Still less must we expect that *Job* should confine himself to a logical refutation of the arguments of his Friends, since he was carrying on a far deeper controversy than that in which he engaged with them. Behind and above them he saw Him who is invisible, so that he was for ever breaking away from his discussion with them in order to appeal to his invisible Antagonist, and to force from Him, if it were possible, some response to his appeal. Least of all must we expect from him logical and well-reasoned replies to the assaults of the Friends *at the outset* of this great argument; for, at the outset, his mind is preoccupied and perturbed by the strange bitter fact that even *they* had turned against him,—that even those who knew him best were suspecting and condemning him. At such a moment, and under the stress of this amazing discovery, he had little heart for weighing the forms which their suspicions and censures assumed, or for considering how he might best rebut them. That the very friends to whom he confidently looked for sympathy should suspect him of some hidden but heinous sin, and cherish this suspicion right in the teeth of all they knew of him—this was enough, and more than enough, to occupy his thoughts; on what grounds they based their assumption he did not care too curiously to inquire. Hence, in his reply to Eliphaz, though at first (Chapter vi. 2–13) he does in some sort take up their censures and reply to them; though, throughout, he bears them so far in mind as that he permits them, directly or indirectly, to prescribe the general course and bent of his thoughts, he breaks off, first (Verses 14–30), to make a passionate assault on the Friends, in which he affirms that their lack of sympathy with him implies a hardness of nature, a guilt beyond any which they have assumed in him; and then (Chapter vii. 1–21) to indulge in a new outburst of misery and despair, in which, forgetting all about the Friends, he challenges the equity of God, his real though unseen Antagonist, and demands death as the sole remedy of sufferings such as his.

“And yet, the pity of it, the pity of it!” Had his human

friends but taken a more friendly and sympathetic tone he might never have questioned the equity and kindness of his Divine Friend. For, after all, it was mainly a question of tone; there is little to blame in the substance of Eliphaz's address. As delicately as a man well could he had intimated that even the best of men is but a man at the best; that if Job *had* provoked and deserved his afflictions, it was only through a frailty common to the whole human race; and that, possibly, his afflictions sprang not more from his sins than from the Divine mercy, and came on him mainly that he might know the blessedness of the man whom God correcteth. Had Eliphaz, instead of rebuking the impatience and despair which Job—in the Curse—expressed under his unparalleled miseries, sympathetically entered into those miseries; had he even admitted that Job's veiled complaint against the God who had given him life was just so long as he conceived God to be hostile to him, and entreated him not to assume that God was hostile simply because He afflicted him, since correction was a sign of love as well as of anger, Job would have been comforted by his Friend's unabated faith in him; by his kindness and compassion he might have been enabled to hold fast his confidence in the compassion and kindness of Jehovah. But to be suspected, condemned even, to have his guilt assumed by those to whom he looked for pity and solace, was more than he could brook. Not only did their assumption of his guilt and their covert insinuation of it provoke him to anger, to self-justification, to the demand,

Make me to see 't; or at the least so prove it
That the probation bear no hinge or loop
To hang a doubt on;

but losing faith in the friendliness, in the very justice of man, he also well-nigh lost all faith in the justice and friendliness of God.

CHAPTERS VI. AND VII.

CHAPTER VI. 1.—*Then answered Job and said :*

2. *Would that my passion were duly weighed,
And that my misery were laid in the balance against it,*

3. *For then would it be heavier than the sand of the sea :
 Therefore have my words been wild.*
4. *Lo, the arrows of the Almighty are in me,
 And their venom drinketh up my spirit ;
 The terrors of God array themselves against me.*
5. *Doth the wild ass bray over the grass,
 Or loweth the ox over his fodder ?*
6. *Can the insipid be eaten without salt,
 Or is there savour in the white of an egg ?*
7. *My soul refuseth to touch them ;
 They are as food which I loathe.*
8. *O that I might have my request,
 That God would grant me the thing that I long for,—*
9. *Even that God would please to crush me,
 That He would let loose his hand and tear me off !*
10. *Yet this would still be my solace,
 And I would exult, even under the pain which spareth not,
 That I have not denied the words of the Holy One.*
11. *But what is my strength that I should hope,
 And what my term that I should still be patient ?*
12. *Is my strength the strength of stones ?
 Is my flesh brass ?*
13. *Is not my help gone,
 And resource quite driven from me ?*
14. *A friend should pity the afflicted,
 Lest he forsake the fear of the Almighty ;*
15. *But my brethren have become treacherous as a torrent,
 Like the streams of the wady that pass away,
 That become turbid with ice,*
16. *And in which the snow is dissolved :
 What time they wax warm they vanish ;*
17. *When it is hot, they are dried up out of their place :
 The caravans divert their track,
 They go up into the desert and perish ;*
18. *The caravans of Tema looked,
 The merchants of Sheba hoped for them :
 They were ashamed that they had trusted,
 They came up to them and blushed.*
19. *Even so, now, ye are nought ;
 Ye see a terror and are terrified.*
20. *Is it that I said, “ Confer a boon upon me ; ”
 Or, “ Of your substance offer a gift on my behalf ; ”*
21. *Or, “ Rescue me from the hand of an adversary ; ”*

- Or, “ Ransom me from the hand of the violent ? ”
 24. Teach me, and I will be mute,
 And make clear to me wherein I have erred.
 25. How forcible are honest rebukes !
 But what doth your reproof reprove ?
 26. Think ye to reprove words !
 But the words of the desperate are for the wind.
 27. Ye would even cast lots on the orphan,
 And traffic over a friend.
 28. Now, therefore, be pleased to look upon me :
 I shall not surely lie to your face !
 29. Come again, now : let there be no unfairness :
 Come again : still is my cause just.
 30. Is there any unfairness in my tongue ?
 Cannot my palate discriminate that which is wrong ?

CHAPTER VII. 1.—*Hath not man a term of hard service on earth,
 And are not his days like the days of a hireling ?*

2. *Like a slave who panteth for the shade,
 And like a hireling who waiteth for his wage,*
 3. *So months of vanity have been made my heritage,
 And nights of weariness have been allotted me.*
 4. *If I lay me down, I say, “ When shall I arise ? ”
 And the night lengtheneth itself out ;
 I am full of tossings until daybreak.*
 5. *With vermin and an earthly crust is my flesh clad ;
 My skin stiffeneth, and then dischargeth.*
 6. *My days glide swifter than a shuttle,
 And come to a close without hope.*
 7. *O remember that my life is but a breath,
 That mine eye will never again see good !*
 8. *The eye that seeth me shall see me no more :
 Thine own eyes shall look for me, but I shall not be.*
 9. *As a cloud when it dissolveth is gone,
 So he that goeth down to Hades cometh up no more ;*
 10. *No more shall he revisit his home,
 Neither shall his place know him any more,*
 11. *Therefore I will not curb my mouth,
 In the anguish of my spirit will I speak ;
 I will make my plaint in the bitterness of my soul.*
 12. *Am I a sea, or a monster,
 That Thou settest a watch upon me ?*

13. *When I say, " My couch shall comfort me,
 My bed may assuage my pain,"*
14. *Then Thou scarest me with dreams,
 And terrifiest me with visions,*
15. *So that my soul maketh choice of strangling
 And of death rather than a life like mine.*
16. *I waste away ! I shall not live long !
 Let me alone ; for my days are but a vapour.*
17. *What is man that Thou shouldst prize him,
 And set thine heart upon him ;*
18. *That Thou shouldst visit him morning by morning,
 And try him moment by moment ?*
19. *How long wilt Thou not look away from me,
 Nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle !*
20. *I have sinned ! yet what have I done to Thee,
 O Thou Watcher of men ?
 Why hast Thou made me thy stumbling-block
 So that I am become a burden unto myself ?*
21. *And why wilt Thou not pardon my transgression,
 And cause my sin to pass away ?
 For I must soon lay me in the dust :
 Thou shalt seek me, but I shall not be.*

In *Chapter vi. Verses 2-13* we have Job's real answer to the argument of Eliphaz. This wise and devout Temanite had opened (*Chapter iv. 2-11*) with a reproof of the wild and excessive passion—passionate and uncontrolled expressions of emotion being always a grave offence to the Oriental mind—exhibited by Job, and had even intimated that passion so unbridled threw some doubt on his integrity. If he were pious, should not his piety be a stay to him now? If he were upright, could he be so hopeless and despairing? As he went on, he had once more harped on this string (*Chapter v. 2*), censuring "passion" as a mark of impiety and "indignation" as a proof of folly. To this censure Job replies in his opening words. (Compare *Chap. vi. 2* with *Chap. v. 2*.) He affirms that his "passion" was perfectly consistent with his integrity, since it was not out of proportion to his "misery,"—the word here used for "misery" being a peculiar one, and denoting, as Schultens has pointed out, "an abysmal and boundless misery." If this profound and im-

measurable misery were *laid* or *lifted*—the Hebrew verb indicates its *weight*—into the balance against it; if the misery and the passion were placed in opposite scales, the misery would be found immeasurably the heavier of the two, heavier even than that proverbial indication of the countless and immeasurable, “the sand of the sea.” He justifies his passion, therefore, as only the natural expression of a misery so profound. Yet he confesses that his words have been “wild,” or “hot;” and pleads in excuse for it that his very spirit within him has been dried up, absorbed, by the poison shot into it by the arrows of the Almighty, so that he is no longer master whether of himself or of his words. (*Verses 3 and 4*). He pleads still further that “the terrors of God,” *i.e.* all the terrors which even Jehovah can summon up and combine together, have advanced in battle array against him, so that his struggles, however “wild,” and his outcries, however “hot,” are but the natural and instinctive motions of a soul exposed to the onset and siege of a host so vast, potent, irresistible.

How natural his outcries and complaints are he illustrates by citing two proverbs (*Verses 5 and 6*). No creature complains without cause; so long as he has a due and meet supply of his needs the ass does not bray over his grass, nor the ox low over his fodder; they cry out only when they lack food, when they suffer want or pain. And, on the other hand, every creature complains at and refuses with disgust that which is contrary to its nature, which does not really meet its wants,—insipid or loathsome food, for instance. “Is it likely, then,” he argues, “that *I* cry out without cause? Do not the very wildness and violence of my outcries indicate the extremity of misery to which I am reduced?” It seemed to him that his natural cravings had been crossed, that all savour and joy had gone out of his life; that to be shut up to a life so full of loss and misery and shame was like being set down to a loathsome and diseased food which his soul disdained (*Verse 7*).¹

¹ The weight of modern authority preponderates so heavily for the reading of *Verses 6 and 7* given in the text, that I feel compelled to bow to it. At the same time much might be said in favour of the older interpre-

As he once more contemplates the life which has been assigned him, his old impatience comes back on him, and once more he virtually curses his day. Eliphaz had threatened him with death (Chap. iv. 19-21, and Chap. v. 2), as the last of ills, should he refuse to submit himself to the correction of the Almighty. Job retorts that this last of ills is now his first and only hope, that it is the one and only consolation left him (Chap. vi. 8-10). In a charming flow of beautiful and tender figures Eliphaz had promised him a restoration to the Divine favour if he would but accept the chastening of the Lord (Chap. v. 17-26); and now (Chap. vi. 11-13) Job declares that it is too late for him to indulge such a hope as that; he is out of love with life, and would not "stretch out his spirit" toward happier and wealthier conditions, even if he could.

The one thing he longs for (*Verses 8-10*) is that God would bring his life and sufferings to an end; for he still holds fast his integrity, and could therefore meet death without fear or shame. It is not simply that he desires extinction; but he desires it while yet he is unconscious of having denied, or renounced, the words of the Holy One. Into what sins a

tation, which saw in them Job's revulsion from the kind of consolation pressed upon him by Eliphaz as the spokesman of the Friends. There is nothing in the Hebrew to render such an interpretation impossible, or even forced. And while I yield to the authority which gives the preference to the later reading, I for myself still prefer the former. It seems to me that we reach the more natural sense of the words when we take them as expressing the impulse of scorn quickened in the breast of Job by the insipid and unwelcome moralizing of the Friends, of the disgust which their "solemn and impertinent prosing" excited in him. I admit, indeed, that to take them in this sense causes a break in the continuity of Job's thoughts; but such sudden changes and revulsions of mood are characteristic of him, as they are of every man who speaks under the pressure of excessive passion, of extreme misery or pain. And surely nothing could be more true to nature than that Job should hold the words of Eliphaz, in so far as they were true, to be as insipid and savourless as the white of an egg eaten without salt, because not pertinent to his case; and that, in so far as they hinted suspicion of his guilt—in so far, that is, as they were not true, he should regard them as a loathsome and poisonous food against which his gorge rose, "which his soul refused so much as to touch." So that while I defer to the authority of far better scholars than myself, I do so somewhat reluctantly, and as one who would like their verdict to be reconsidered.

life of shame and misery may plunge him he cannot tell; but as yet he has no fear, no such sense of sin as would lead him to fear standing before God and being called to account for all his actions to Him. Hence he would “exult”—literally, “leap and dance for joy”—under the most unsparing pain, the keenest torture, were he only assured that it would put an end to his existence. Whatever death was, and meant, there could be nothing terrible in it to one who had a conscience void of offence toward God and man.

No other hope than that of death is left him (*Verse 11*); all expectation of recovery was lost; he must soon succumb to his terrible malady. If there was nothing to fear in the future, assuredly there was nothing in the present to regret. What conceivable “end,” or “term,” was before him, that he should “still be patient”—literally, “still stretch out his spirit,” as one who hoped to tide over a dark interval and pass on into a happy future? He was not made of stone, or of brass (*Verse 12*), that he could hope to come unscathed through such fiery and searching trouble. All “help” from within was gone, all the inward springs of life were exhausted; and all “resource,” all power of rallying from his exhaustion (*Verse 13*). It was vain to talk to him of recovery and restoration to the providential favour of God; he was past all that: his life was shattered and poisoned to the very centre, his hope plucked up from the very root.

Thus far, then, the reply of Job is logical enough; he has taken up the leading points of the argument of Eliphaz and answered them. Eliphaz had reproached him with excess of passion; Job replies that his passion was immeasurably less than his misery. Eliphaz, however gently, had intimated his conviction that the calamities of Job were the consequence and punishment of some great sin, though perchance his sin had sprung only from the frailty he shared with all men; and Job replies that he has never consciously and wilfully “denied the words,” *i.e.* disobeyed the commands, of God. Eliphaz had invited him to repentance and confession, in order that through these he might rise into an ampler and more enduring happiness; and Job replies, both that he has nothing to confess and that the very desire for recovery to happier

conditions has died out of him, that he loathes life however fair it may be, and longs only for the death which others fear.

And, now, having disposed of the arguments of Eliphaz, having repulsed the assault which the Friends, through Eliphaz, had made on him, he, in his turn, delivers (in Verses 14-30) an assault on them. He charges them with having been wanting in common humanity, with having condemned him for sins of which he is innocent, and challenges them to speak out to his face, if they can and dare, the accusation which in their hearts they prefer against him.

Job starts with a general and admitted principle (*Verse 14*). Pity, compassionate kindness, should be shewn by his friend to one who lies *all dissolved in affliction* (such is the force of the Hebrew for "the afflicted"), "lest he forsake the fear of the Almighty," or "because he is in danger of forsaking" that fear. The Original will admit of either sense. Whichever we take, the thought at the bottom of the Verse is the same, viz. that under the pressure of great calamity a man is likely to lose his confidence in the sympathy of God unless his faith in God be reinforced by the sympathy and kindness of man; and that, therefore, his friends should deal gently with him and shew him all the kindness they can, and thus save him from altogether losing touch with God. "*You have violated this admitted principle of conduct,*" says Job to his Friends; "*you have failed in the supreme duty of friendship, and so have made it hard for me to hold fast my trust in the Friend.*"

This charge he elaborates in the figure of *Verses 15-20*. He compares his "brethren" to a treacherous torrent which promises a succour it does not yield. But no sooner is the torrent mentioned than the Poet sets himself to achieve another of those literary feats of which we have already seen a sample in Chapter iv. Verses 10, 11. Or, rather, no sooner does he light on this simile than he *sees* the torrent rushing and foaming down its rough stone-strewed bed; and with his quick love of all that is picturesque he is drawn on to paint a finished and elaborate picture of what he so vividly

perceives. With admirable precision he seizes on the main features in the appearance and functions of such a water-course as he had in his eye; with astonishing power he compels them each and all to contribute to the moral he had at heart to enforce it. That he took the imagery of this passage from the Hauran is probable enough; for, like many other districts in the East, the Hauran is intersected by deep ravines, *wadys*, which, while they are for the most part dry, are filled to overflowing when rain falls on the neighbouring heights. In summer no river waters the land; though in a few of the wadys a little surface water may trickle down from pool to pool; but in winter the land is alive with sudden and violent torrents. The streams of the wady *are* treacherous, therefore; they do “pass away:” in the winter months they become “black,” or “turbid,” with ice and with the snows which slip into them from the hills and precipices between which they run. Full and noisy when they are little in request, in the cold months when travellers are few; when it waxes warm, and caravans frequent the roads, the waters “dry up,” evaporate, and “vanish,” leaving only heaps of shingle or piles of boulders, though the banks of the wadys still attract the unwary traveller by their unusual verdure and brightness. Even the caravans of travelled and experienced traders go out of their way, “divert their track,” in order to drink and to fill their water-skins at some of these torrent-beds in which an occasional pool may be found, and “perish” in the desert to which they return for lack of the water they vainly hoped to find in it. Nor is the Poet content with the mention of caravans in general. He must throw in a touch of local colour by instancing the caravans of Tema and of Sheba,—Tema, to the north of the Hauran, the seat of a clan of wandering Ishmaelites, and Sheba far away to the south, the emporium of those wealthy “merchants” of whom we have already heard as adding to their wealth by raids on distant lands as well as by traffic with most of the larger cities of the East.¹ These caravans, known familiarly to the Hauranites, since they frequented the great road from Damascus to Egypt, are adduced to exemplify the

¹ See comment on Chapter i. 15.

fate of all travellers who trust to these treacherous streams. They are "ashamed" to have put their trust in that which had often failed them before, in which experience should have forbidden them to confide.

Having thus elaborated the simile, lingering over it, and adding touch to touch, the Poet represents Job (*Verse 21*) as hurling it, with its accumulated force, at the Friends: "Even so now, *ye* are nought,"—are "gone to nothing," like the torrent. "I looked to you for comfort, as the caravans to the stream; my very life, like theirs, hanging on the issue: and, like them, I looked in vain. Ye have seen a terror, and are terrified:" *i.e.* "Ye have seen the abject and ghastly condition to which I have been reduced, and, instead of succouring me, ye have shrunk away from me in dismay."

I have spoken of the astonishing power with which the Poet, while elaborating his simile, compelled every feature of it to contribute to the moral he had in his mind; and it may be worth while to point out how exactly every touch of his description finds an analogy in the conduct of the Friends. The stream of the wady rolls in a boiling and resounding torrent in the winter, when it is little needed by men; and so Job's friends had been loud and profuse in their professions when he was "great before all the Sons of the East" and had no need of their help. Even in the summer, when the torrent is dried up, it holds out a promise of succour in the bright and abounding verdure of its margins; and so the Friends, when they first came to visit Job in his affliction, seemed so full of a tender and considerate kindness that he had been drawn on to throw off all reserve and, by uttering his despair, to solicit their sympathy. The torrent cheated and mocked those who had trusted in it, yielding them no succour when they most craved it; and in like manner the Friends had disappointed the confident hopes which Job had reposed in them. For the caravans which had been cheated by the treacherous torrent there was nothing left but to return to the desert and die; and, in like manner, now that his Friends had failed him, Job felt as he shrank back into his misery that no resource was left him, that his sole prospect was death, his one longing a sudden and immediate death.

Verses 22, 23.—As he had looked to the Friends for nothing but sympathy, he is the more betrayed. It was not much that he had asked of them; they might have granted his prayer and have been none the poorer for it. With bitter irony he expatiates on this thought, acknowledging that it might have been unreasonable of him had he counted on them for any costly or impoverishing proof of friendship, and reproaching them that, when he had asked nothing but “the simple boon of pity,” even that slight strain on their friendship had proved too severe.

Verse 24.—As they have no pity, no sympathy, to give, let them at least convict him of the sin which has averted it. Let them openly charge him with the transgression which they had covertly insinuated against him, which Eliphaz had assumed throughout without a shadow of proof, and in which, no doubt, both Bildad and Zophar by their looks and bearing had intimated their concurrence. Let them, if they can do no more for him, at least “make clear wherein he has erred.”

Verse 25.—There is nothing he more heartily respects than to be plainly taught and honestly reproved; but what is their covert and evasive insinuation of guilt meant to convey?

Verse 26.—Are the wild words of his Curse the sin that shuts up their bowels of compassion against him? Pshaw! The words of a man crazed with misery are no proof of guilt, no sufficient ground for suspicion and rebuke. Idle as the wind, they should be left for the wind to blow away.

Verse 27.—Men who would make him an offender for “the wild and whirling words” of the Curse forced from him by his misery were capable of any baseness. They must be pitiless as men who should enslave an orphan for his dead father’s debt, and then cast lots whose he should be,—as pitiless and inhuman as men who would barter away their best friend for pelf; for were they not trying to gain an added reputation for wisdom and piety, or an added sense of their own piety and wisdom, by condemning the assumed follies and sins of their friend?

In *Verses 28–30* he once more challenges them to speak out in plain blunt terms the charge which they have been ambiguously giving out. Let them look him in the eyes, and

say whether he is so wanting in moral sense and honesty as to lie to their face, by asserting that he is innocent when he knows himself to be guilty.

To explain the repeated "Return," or "Come again," of *Verse 29*, Renan supposes that, stung by the irony and keen reproaches of Job, the Friends had made a movement to retire. But there is no need for such a supposition. The meaning of the phrase seems to be that, still daring them to be open and sincere with him, Job affirms that, "come" as often as they will, renew their investigation as often and carry it as deeply as they may, they will still find "his cause just," still find "that the right is in it,"¹ if only they come without prejudice, without assuming the guilt they are bound to prove.

In *Verse 30* "the tongue" and "the palate"—i.e. the sense of taste—is used by a common Oriental metaphor for the moral sense, the power to discern good and evil. What Job demands of the Friends is whether they believe his moral sense to be so perverted that he can no longer discriminate right from wrong. On no other hypothesis can he account for their assuming him to be guilty of sins of which he feels and avows himself to be innocent. Why do they not accept his assertion of his integrity? Can they look him in the face and affirm either that he is wilfully deceiving them, or that he no longer knows himself?

There are both resemblances and differences between Chapter vi. and Chapter vii. In Chapter vi., as we have seen, Job addresses himself to the Friends, (1) replying with logical force and directness to the arguments of Eliphaz, and (2) breaking out into keen reproach against the men who professed so much love for him, but shewed so little. In Chapter vii. he addresses himself to God, (1) at first (Verses 1–11) indirectly, stating his case to Him and appealing for compassion; and (2) then (Verses 12–21) directly, breaking out into passionate reproaches against the God who could listen to his appeal unmoved. So that, in form, Chapter vii. corresponds very closely with Chapter vi. *There* he first argued with his

¹ So Ewald translates; "noch hab' ich Recht darin;" and Heiligstedt, "adhuc iustitia me in eo (ea re) est, adhuc causa mea iusta est."

Friends, and then reproached them; *here* he first argues with Jehovah, and then reproaches Him. This is the main resemblance between the two. The main difference between them is that, while Chapter vi. has more of the form of a reply to the argument of the Friends, Chapter vii. is cast more in the form of a soliloquy, in which, turning from men, Job broods over those sufferings of his soul which were the soul of his sufferings, and cries out both *to* God and *against* Him.

But, at first, though he no longer addresses himself to those who sat on the *mezbele* with him, he does not wholly forget them or the rebuke they have uttered by the mouth of Eliphaz. He does wholly forget them in the latter section of the Chapter, the sense of the Divine Presence overshadowing and engrossing his thoughts: but in the earlier section his thoughts are, consciously or unconsciously, shaped by the words to which he had just listened, and that in two ways. Eliphaz had censured Job's craving for death as unreasonable and impious; Job now vindicates it as the only reasonable course left open to him. Eliphaz had drawn (Chap. v. 17-26) a charming and seductive picture of human life, describing the Divine Providence as engaged in sending men rain and fruitful seasons, as raising the lowly, saving the poor and needy, and causing all things to work together for the good of those who accepted instruction and correction; and now, over against this bright conception of human life, baseless to Job for the moment as the fabric of a vision, he sets his own dark and lurid conception of it: to him it seems a term of hard service, in which days of toil and weariness alternate with nights of trouble and unrest. As he elaborates his conception we become aware that, though he had the words of Eliphaz in his mind at the outset, he is gradually edging away from him and his fanciful picture of the ways of God with men, turning toward God and sub-audibly appealing to Him, until (at Verse 8) the sub-audible appeal becomes audible in the words, "*Thine* own eyes shall look for me, but I shall not be." As if appalled, however, at the sound himself had made, he instantly falls back into an impersonal and indirect tone; and it is not till he utterly despairs of extorting any response from God by indirect and

pitiful appeal that he breaks out, in the second section of the Chapter, into direct and vehement reproaches against the cruelty of God in turning a deaf ear to his supplication. He has cried to Heaven for pity and redress till he is weary; and as there is neither voice nor any to answer, nor any that regarded, he resolves to let loose his anguish, to pour out all the bitterness of his soul. Peradventure insult and reproach may provoke an attention denied to supplication and appeal. But we must now consider the opening section of this Chapter more in detail.

In Verses 1-11 Job sets the dark and lurid conception of human life which he had inferred from the facts of experience over against the bright and hopeful conception of it which Eliphaz had spun out of his mere imagination or the baseless assumptions of his theology. He projects his own dark shadow across the whole world of men, or, rather, looking out on them with darkened eyes, he can see nothing but darkness in their lot. On three features in the universal lot of man he lays special emphasis: (1) its misery (Verses 1-5); (2) its brevity (Verses 6-8); and (3) its irrevocableness (Verses 9, 10). That the several counts of his complaint are inconsistent with each other is obvious and undeniable; for, if life be so utterly and intensely miserable, why should a man complain either that it is brief, or that, ended once, it is ended for ever? But the very inconsistency of his complaint is but another touch of nature: for men grievously wronged and afflicted are rarely consistent in their complaints; they seize on and brood over every aspect of their condition which will feed their resentment or their grief, and are not careful to harmonize the one with the other.

In *Verse 1* he compares, not his own life simply, but the general life of man, to a term, a hard term, of military service. In *Verse 2* he compares it to the bitter lot of a slave who pants for the shades of evening that he may know a little rest. In each case the figure is heightened in effect by the introduction of the word "hireling." It is the *hired* soldier on hard military duty whom he has in his mind; the soldier, therefore, who is no longer under the command of the

chief of his own clan, no longer serves one who, from mere self-interest, if not from ties of kinship, might take some thought of him: he has been let out to a foreign despot, who little heeds how many men he squanders so that he may win the day. And, in like manner, it is not the domestic slave, but the *hired* slave, whom he has in his mind; not one who has been born in his master's house, and for whom his master may have a feeling of compassion, or liking, or even of affection, but one that has been let out to a stranger who has no need to spare him to-day that he may be fit for to-morrow's work, and still less any friendly motion of the heart toward him. Job's conception of human life, then, is as bitter and as sombre as it well can be. God appears to him like an alien despot who squanders his soldiers without pity and without remorse on every field; like an alien taskmaster who spares not to overtask his slaves, but exhausts them with heavy toils, that he may get the utmost possible service out of them during the brief term for which he has hired them, insomuch that they have no thought or hope but only this, "When will the day be done? when will our term expire?"

In *Verse 3* Job applies this sombre conception of human life to himself, and finds that it accurately corresponds to his condition. *He* has been made "to inherit months of vanity," "months of weariness have been allotted him;"—a very fine Verse, full of choice words and epithets. Both the verbs indicate that Job had done nothing to cause, or to deserve, his misery; it is "a heritage" on which he has been compelled to enter, and which he had done nothing to shape or prepare; it has been "allotted" him, without his will, against his will. The epithets in which he describes the misery of his life are equally striking and graphic. No man who has known what it is to have whole days or weeks cut out of his life by some disabling pain of brain or nerve, to be rendered incapable of "aught that wears the name of action," but will enter with keen sympathy into Job's complaint of "months of *vanity*," months, *i.e.*, of unreality, months that come and go but leave nothing behind them save a dreary sense of wasted opportunities, months in which a man is rendered unfit for any of the sweet or active uses of life.

Nor will any man whose rest is often broken, who is often and long denied the boon of sleep, sleep

That knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, *sore labour's bath*,
Balm of hurt minds,

fail to comprehend what he meant by "nights of toil" or of "weariness." Most men have known what it is to long for the light of returning day even as they lie down on a bed that has no rest for them, to feel the night, as he graphically puts it (in *Verse 4*), "*lengthening itself out*," and to lie tossing till daybreak, half persuaded that daybreak will never come.

But, happily, there are very few who will ever know *all* that he endured. For (in *Verse 5*) he adds a new and terrible feature to his misery. Not only is he a slave worn out and spent by intolerable toils by day, and then denied the solace of repose, "*sore labour's bath*," at night; but also he is so terribly unfit for toil and watching, laden as he is and broken down with the languors and disgusts of a most loathsome disease. The Verse records some sickening symptoms of his strange and terrible disorder. As *elephantiasis* develops, ulcers are formed in the body, in which maggots breed; the skin gets hot, dry, rough as it stretches, till it looks like the lumpy and corrugated hide of the elephant. These are the "vermin" and this "the earthy crust" of which he complains; and in these same ulcers, over which the skin stretches and contracts, and then bursts to let out a feculent discharge, we have the explanation of the line,

My skin stiffeneth, and then dischargeth.

The first verb denotes violent contraction, and the second purulent discharge.

This, then, is Job's description of the misery of human life in general, and of his own life in particular; a misery so great, so indescribable, as to warrant him, at least in his own judgment, in craving for death, even as the weary overtaken slave pants for the shadows of declining day, and the mercenary whose life is lavishly and carelessly exposed longs for the end

of his term. In Deuteronomy xxviii. 65–67 we have a still finer and more pathetic description of human life burdened and oppressed with misery, which should be compared with these graphic Verses:—“*And among those nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest; but the Lord shall give thee a trembling heart, and failing eyes, and sorrow of spirit; and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt fear day and night, and thou shalt not believe in thy life. In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.*”

In Verse 6 Job turns from the misery to the brevity of human life. He compares it to a weaver's shuttle, “by means of which the weft is shot between the threads of the warp as they are drawn up and down. His days pass as swiftly by as the little shuttle passes backward and forward in the warp.”¹ And, quickly as they pass, they “come to a close without hope,” i.e. without hope of any to succeed them, of any life beyond the present worthy of the name. This point, the brevity of life, is a favourite theme with moralists; but, as usual, Shakespeare beats them easily on their own ground; for what finer moral can be drawn from the brevity of life than that we should use it nobly?

O gentlemen, the time of life is short:
To spend that shortness basely were too long
If life did ride upon a dial's point,
Still ending at the arrival of an hour.

In Verse 7 we have the first sign that the thought of God as present is predominating in the mind of Job, that he has begun to lose sight of the Friends. He does not yet name God, or openly address himself to Him. But his “O remember that my life is but a breath!” can only be meant for the God whom he has known from his youth, and with whom he has been wont to speak as a man speaketh with his friend.

In Verse 8 this covert appeal for pity becomes patent.

¹ Delitzsch *in loco*.

"When my brief life is ended, men will see me no more; and even *Thine* eye shall look for me in vain." All the more significant is it that, with the sense of the Divine Presence full upon him for the moment, his entire conviction that the dead will never be restored to life in this world is balanced—as yet—by no hope of a life beyond that of this world. Nothing can be more hopeless than the tone of *Verses* 9 and 10. Life is like a cloud which, once dissolved, is no more seen. Those who sink into Sheol, the dim Hadean kingdom peopled by the thin ghosts of departed generations, will never revisit the warm upper air. Egyptian tradition had affirmed that if a man were justified in Hades, if he could pass the scrutiny of the final judge, he might any day come forth from it, "and return to his own house." "Alas, it is not true!" sighs Job. "When once he is gone, no man can so much as *revisit his home*, and see how it fares with his beloved; his place will know him no more. Life, once lost, is irrevocably lost."

Therefore, as his life, vexed with misery, is fast coming to an end, and there is no hope of justice or compassion beyond the grave, he resolves (*Verse* 11) to "unpack his heart with words." Why should he curb himself? Nothing is to be lost by plain speaking, for he cannot be more wretched than he is; nothing is to be gained by silent submission, for he has no hope for the future. He *will*, therefore, speak out the anguish of his spirit and give vent to the bitterness of his soul.

These words introduce the final section of his reply to Eliphaz,—his open complaint of the cruelty of Jehovah, who will vouchsafe no answer to his solemn and pathetic appeal. And here we must prepare to see Job at his worst; though, even taken at his worst, it is hard to say why he should be singled out as a sinner above other good men. Jeremiah,¹ for example, cries out against God, "Wilt thou be altogether as a liar unto me and as waters that fail?" And if we can excuse his audacity because of his perplexity, his honesty of intention, his desire to see that God was true though He seemed to be false, why should we condemn Job? He, too, was terribly perplexed; he, too, was honest and sincere; he,

¹ Chapter xv. 18.

too, desired to see that God was true and kind though He seemed false and cruel; he, too, appealed against God only to God Himself. And bitter as was his complaint, we shall hear from him no words more bold and desperate than we may hear again and again from the prophets of a later age. All that God Himself charges him with is "darkening counsel with words devoid of wisdom," *i.e.* with aggravating his own perplexity and misery by these foolish impulsive outcries: and why should *we* suspect him of more than this?

The burden of his complaint is, that he is watched and beset on every side as though he were likely to rise in mutiny against God, or as though he had incurred an unpardonable guilt, although he is unconscious of any wilful transgression or of any treasonable design. With sad irony he demands, first, whether in his weakness and misery he can be *formidable* to God, that he is so incessantly dogged and checked and smitten; and, then, with sad indignation, he demands whether he, who is unconscious of any wilful fault, can have so sinned that his sin cannot be forgiven him.

Verse 12 is patient of two different interpretations. Some Commentators remind us that in the Bible (*Isa. xix. 5*), and they might add in the Coran (*Sura xx. 39*), the Nile is called a sea; that the rising of the Nile was carefully watched, and its overflow guided and confined by dykes lest it should ravage instead of fertilize the land: and these suppose Job to ask whether, like the Nile, he is so dangerous that he needs to be straightly shut in, or like the monster of the Nile, the fierce untameable crocodile, needs to be watched and ensnared lest he should commit havoc and destruction. Others doubt this allusion, and prefer to take the words in a more general sense: and these make Job ask whether he is like the heaven-assaulting ocean to which God Himself had set a bar and gates; or like one of those monstrous

dragons of the prime
That tare each other in their slime?

In either case the meaning of the Verse is clear; Job complains that he, a man, "noble in reason, infinite in faculty," capable of appreciating and responding to an appeal to con-

science and understanding, should be handled roughly and severely as though he were void of sense and reason.

Verses 13 and 14.—No alleviation of his misery, no respite from restraint is allowed him. If he thinks to *share* his pain with his bed, *i.e.* to dull his sense of it in slumber, it only grows more intense and terrible; frightful dreams and visions conspire with the pangs of disease to complete his misery. There is an allusion here, no doubt, to his malady; for Avicenna says that hideous dreams constantly torment those who suffer from elephantiasis.

So is there also in *Verse 15*; for, from the same authority, we learn that this disease commonly terminates in suffocation. It is to this that Job refers when he affirms that he is rendered so desperate by his pangs and his hideous dreams as to prefer "*strangling* and death to such a life as his;" literally, to "*such bones as his*;" and here the allusion is to the exposure and rotting of the bones as this dreadful malady eats away the flesh and corrupts the very skeleton beneath it.

"Let me alone, then," he cries in *Verse 16*, *i.e.* "Depart from me," implying that his life depends on the Divine Presence, that he cannot even die till God withdraw from him. "My days are but an unsubstantial vapour; let it dissolve and pass." Is he—poor, wasted, short-lived wretch that he is—to be treated like the deep, or the monsters of the deep? Is *he* likely to prove formidable to the Almighty Ruler of the universe?

In *Verses 17 and 18* we have the transition to the second point of complaint,—that he is treated as a heinous and unpardonable offender. With bitter irony he wonders that the great Creator of men should so incessantly busy Himself about a creature so mean and frail, as if He set an enormous value on him, as if He could not put him out of his mind, as if He could let no morning pass without coming to inspect him, no moment without putting him to the proof!

This sense of being for ever watched and dogged and spied upon has grown intolerable to him (*Verse 19*). In his impatience and resentment he cries,

How long wilt Thou not look away from me,
Nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle?

the last words being a proverbial expression for the minimum of time, like our "in the twinkling of an eye," or "while I draw my breath."

Verse 20.—Granted that I have sinned, as what man is he that sinneth not? yet *in what* have I sinned, sinned *against Thee*? in what part of the duty I owe to Thee have I failed? Tell me that, "O Thou Watcher of men," or even, "Thou *Spy* upon men!" For the epithet here cast up at God, although not in itself unworthy of Him, is used with a certain bitterness which turns the blessing of God's watchful and incessant care over men into the irritating curse of espionage.¹ To him it seemed that, by some miserable fatality, he was always in God's way, that, so to speak, God was always stumbling against or over him, so that his life had become a mere burden to him; and this, not through any fault of his own, but rather from the malicious pleasure which God took in striking him from his path. In short, he felt as we feel when, for no reason in ourselves that we can discover, everything goes wrong with us, and we are perpetually brought into hostile contact with the infinite Power which pervades the universe.

Verse 21.—It was inconceivable to him why the sins of his infirmity—and he was conscious of no wilful and deliberate offence—should not be forgiven him, why God, who used to be so merciful and compassionate, should make so much of them, and why his appeal for pity and pardon should pass unheard.

Whereto serves mercy
But to confront the visage of offence?
And what's in prayer but this two-fold force,
To be forestalled ere we come to fall,
Or pardon'd, being down?

He cannot see as yet that many of the calamities which come on men are only undeserved in the sense that men have not and cannot deserve so great a blessing as they contain and disguise; and as yet he does not see that he is being led on,

¹ Renan forcibly conveys this sense to the Continental mind by translating the phrase, "*O espion de l'homme.*"

by a deepened sense of the inequalities of the life that now is, to infer the life to come,—an issue, however, to which every step of the argument is bringing him nearer and nearer.

3. BILDAD TO JOB.

CHAPTER VIII.

Bildad restates the argument of Eliphaz; but he both gives it a new edge and clearness and puts it on another basis. Like Eliphaz, he affirms the law of the Divine Providence to be that it renders good to the good and evil to the evil,—*malis male, bonis bene*; but he enunciates this law with more force and in a harsher tone. Eliphaz, whom we have conceived as a man of the prophetic order and spirit, in entire accordance with that conception of him had based his conclusion on oracles and visions; but now Bildad—the sage, who leaned much on the ancient and proverbial wisdom of the East, in entire accordance with that conception of his character and bent, bases the same conclusion on the traditions of the fathers. In Verses 2-7 he states this law of the Divine Providence, and applies it to the case of Job; and in Verses 8-19 he confirms his statement of it by an appeal to the wisdom of the ancients, a wisdom leisurely gathered from their long experience and verified by the experience of subsequent generations. Thus to the voice of divine oracles, cited by Eliphaz, he adds the voice of universal human experience, so that once more Job finds both Heaven and earth arrayed against him.

CHAPTER VIII.

1.—*Then answered Bildad the Shuchite and said:*

2. *How long wilt thou speak thus,*

And how long shall the words of thy mouth be a boisterous storm?

3. *Doth God wrest judgment?*

Doth the Almighty wrest justice?

4. *Though thy sons have sinned against Him,*
 And He hath given them over to their own offences,
5. *If thou wouldest seek unto God,*
 And make supplication unto the Almighty,—
6. *If thou art pure and upright,*
 Then will He wake up in thy behalf
 And restore the habitation of thy righteousness,
7. *So that, though thy beginning be small,*
 Thy end shall be very great.
8. *For ask now of the former generation,*
 And apply to the wisdom of their forefathers ;—
9. *For we are but of yesterday and know nothing,*
 Because our days on earth are but a shadow :—
10. *Shall not they teach thee, speak to thee,*
 And well forth proverbs out of their hearts ?
11. *“ Can the papyrus grow where there is no marsh,*
 Or the rush wax large where there is no water ?
12. *While yet in its greenness, and though it be uncut,*
 It withereth before any other herb :
13. *So fareth it with all that forget God,*
 And thus shall the hope of the impious perish.
14. *His hope is cut in sunder ;*
 His trust—a spider’s web ;
15. *Though he lean on his house, it will not stand ;*
 Though he grasp it, it will not endure.
16. *He swelleth with sap in the sunshine,*
 And his suckers shoot forth over the garden ;
17. *His roots twist through the mould,*
 He looks down on a house of stones.
18. *But when God destroyeth him from his place,*
 Then it denieth him [saying], ‘ I never saw thee.’
19. *Behold, this is the joy of his course,*
 And out of his dust shall others spring up.”
20. *Behold, God will not spurn the perfect,*
 Nor take evil-doers by the hand.
21. *When He filleth thy mouth with laughter,*
 And thy lips with song,
22. *They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame,*
 And the tent of the wicked shall perish.

He commences, as Eliphaz had done before him, by rebuking the wild passionate outcries of Job (*Verse 2*), and declares his words to be empty as the wind and vehement as

a boisterous storm,—noisy, irrational, injurious. He quite understands, however (*Verse 3*), that by his wild vehement words Job intends to impugn the justice of God, and that he has impugned it unreasonably and intemperately; and therefore he declares the utter impossibility of any departure from justice in the almighty Ruler of the world. The Judge of all the earth *must* do right; for *Him* to do wrong is and must be impossible: or how should the earth have endured so long? As he cannot for a moment admit that Job's misery springs from the iniquity of God, he can only attribute it to the iniquity of man. And hence (in *Verses 4-7*) he restates the law, that it is well with the righteous and ill with the wicked, with that incisiveness and harshness to which I have just referred. He has no ground but conjecture and dogmatic inference for charging the children of Job with a guilt that deserved destruction; but he forgets that simply

to vouch this is no proof
Without more certain and more overt test
Than these thin habits and poor likelihoods

do prefer against them. He confidently assumes and bluntly affirms their guilt; the argument in his mind seeming to be, "All who die a sudden and dreadful death are great sinners; thy sons have died a sudden and dreadful death: therefore they were great sinners." So confident is he in his assumption that (in *Verse 4*) he sets forth their doom in a singularly energetic and expressive phrase,—

Thy sons have sinned against Him,
And He hath given them over to their own offences;

or, literally, "*He hath delivered them up into the hands of their guilt*," making, that is, their very sin their punishment, judgment treading on the very heels of offence. It is but another application of the same providential law which we have in *Verses 5-7*. Here Bildad frames two hypotheses about Job: "If *you* have sinned, as well as your sons, yet by seeking unto God, by confessing your sins to Him and supplicating his mercy, He will yet forgive and bless you;" and, on the other hand, "If, as you affirm, you are pure and upright,

God will soon wake up in your behalf, and not only restore the habitation in which your righteous life has been passed, but will also bless your latter end far more than your beginning."

The point Bildad labours at throughout is to uphold the conclusion that, as God is just, good must come to the good and ill to the evil. And he states and applies this conclusion honestly, harshly even, bearing in mind perhaps Job's declared respect for frank and "honest rebukes" (Chapter vi. 25). No doubt, as has been pleaded in his behalf, he states his conviction of the guilt of Job and his sons hypothetically, and, so far as his mere words go, might be assuming it only for the sake of his argument: but neither is there any doubt that he did assume their guilt in his own mind, and meant to imply that they had received nothing more than their due. And we may say of him, I suppose, (1) that, if he was honestly convinced that their calamities were only the due reward of their guilt, it was friendly, not unfriendly, of him to say so; and (2) that it would have been still more friendly of him to say so frankly than to insinuate it in hypothetical forms of speech.

To sustain his conclusion, to bear him out in upholding the equity of the Divine Providence, he calls in the aid of Tradition; he appeals not simply to the ancestors of living men, but to *their* ancestors: he gets back as near to the original fountains of thought as he can, believing apparently that wisdom, like good wine, is the better the longer it has been kept. He quotes (Verses 11-18) three antique sayings or proverbs—that of the papyrus, that of the spider's web, and that of the gourd; and all these are probably derived from a traditional literature of the extremest antiquity. At the same time I cannot but think that these proverbs have passed through the Poet's own mind and have been embellished by it; for they bear the mark of his characteristic elaboration and finish. So many of the words in this passage, moreover, are Egyptian, or of Egyptian derivation, that, probably, we shall not err in inferring that the ancients whom Bildad is made to quote were Egyptian sages who flourished before Moses floated on the Nile, or perchance even before Abraham went down into Egypt. Assuredly the Poet shews, throughout his work, an intimate

and singular familiarity with the customs and arts of Egypt; assuredly also there are now in the libraries of Europe many Egyptian *papyri* of the remotest antiquity on which similar ethical sayings and picturesque proverbs are inscribed. And, therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume, from the free use of Egyptian words in this passage, that here too we have ethical and pictorial sayings culled from the experience of ancient Egyptian sages.

To these Bildad appeals—alleging (*Verse 9*) that the men of his own time had so brief a span and were so far removed from the origin of things, that they “knew nothing” compared with the leisurely ancients, whose days on earth were so much longer and who stood so much nearer to the original fountains of wisdom. They, he says (*Verse 10*), will give us words “*out of their hearts*,” i.e. words tested and elaborated by the meditation of many years, words summing up their whole observation and experience of human life, and not mere windy nothings, like those of Job, thrown out at the mere impulse of the passing moment.

The first proverb, that of the papyrus (*Cyperus papyrus*), is elaborated in *Verses 11–13*. This water-rush, or reed, the Arabs still call by its old name “*Babeer*,” of which *papyrus* is the Latin and *paper* the English form. The papyrus springs up in marshes and in the borders of streams and canals, where the water soon dries up in the fierce summer heats; the finest of grasses, it often withers away in its first beauty. Side by side with it grows “the rush”—or, as Job calls it, the *âchu*, an Egyptian, not a Hebrew, word—probably the edible rush (*Cyperus esculentus*), since the same word is used in Genesis xli. 2, where cattle are described as feeding on it.¹ The moral of the proverb is multiform. As the various kinds of *Cyperus* depend on the water they suck up, so the life of man depends on the favour of God. While that endures, he flourishes and luxuriates. When it is withdrawn—and it always is withdrawn from the wicked—he withers away; there is no need

¹ In *Verse 11* no less than three words in the Original—the words for “papyrus,” “grass,” and “rush”—are Egyptian, and countenance the hypothesis of the Egyptian origin of these proverbs or parables.

to cut him down or strike him down : it is enough that he is no longer cherished and sustained by the Divine grace.

The second proverb, that of the spider's web, is elaborated in *Verses* 14 and 15 ; where the hope, the self-confidence, of the wicked is compared to a web cut in sunder, or cut asunder from its main support. In vain the spider flings his weight in this direction or that to balance it ; in vain he grasps it with his claws to steady or guide it as it trembles in the wind ; his struggles are useless and desperate ; his shattered domicile falls into ruin and decay, and he partakes its fate. The spider's web, though it be so flimsy, is here called a house ; so is it also in the Coran (*Sura* xxix. 40), where we find this singular passage : "The likeness of those who take to themselves guardians instead of God is the likeness of *the spider* who buildeth her *a house* ; but, verily, frailest of all houses is the house of the spider. Would that they knew this !" Possibly the inspired Poet had the same thought in his mind as Mohammed, and meant to suggest that, however solid and spacious the abode of unrighteousness may look, it is flimsy and fragile as the web of the spider.

The third proverb, that of the gourd, is elaborated in *Verses* 16-18. We infer that some kind of creeper, bine, or gourd, such as springs up with the most astonishing rapidity and luxuriance in the East, is here described from the very terms of the description. But it should be observed that the Poet never names it. The fact is that, in this last proverb, the moral breaks through the simile, or fable, all the way along ; from the very first the inner spiritual sense is blended with the figure in which it was to be conveyed. The "he," the nominative of the passage, is not the gourd, or creeping plant, but the wicked man who is compared to it ; it is *his* course which is described in terms suitable to that of the gourd. If we take the pains to disentangle the fable from the moral, what it comes to is this:—The unrighteous man is like a quick-springing luxuriant bine or weed, which grows green with sap in the sunshine, shoots out its suckers on every side, strikes down its roots into the fertile mould, and regards with special pride the fact that it has "a house of stones," *i.e.* that its roots are twisted round stones and its soft easily

broken stem protected by them; in short that it has been lucky enough to spring up amid and under a pile of stones which shelter and guard it, and even feed and cherish it by retaining and reflecting the heat. But when it is plucked up, it leaves no trace behind it; the very spot in which the worthless parasite shot up is ashamed of it, and denies all knowledge of it. So the bad bold man builds up his fortunes rapidly, thrives in the warm stimulating rays of prosperity, flatters himself especially on the solid reality and stability of his possessions; but when his good fortune suddenly vanishes, when the blow falls that impoverishes and exposes him, the very society which cherished him and contributed to his success grows ashamed of him and denies all complicity with his frauds and crimes.

"This," says Bildad (*Verse 19*), with keen sarcasm, "is *the joy of his course*,"—so base, so evanescent, conducting to so shameful an end; his lusty growth is but for a moment, and dies away to make room for fairer and more fruitful growths; the sinner's place is soon filled up and his very name forgotten.

And then, in the closing verses of the Chapter (*Verses 20–22*), he turns to Job, and applies these parables of ancient wisdom to his case. Not by complaining of the law of Divine Providence, but by complying with it; not by vainly craving that it were other than it is, but by accommodating himself to it and availing himself of it, will he regain health, wealth, and peace. God will neither spurn him if he does well, nor grasp him by the hand—to sustain him—if he does ill; but if he be or become perfect, *i.e.* of a single and obedient heart, then God will yet fill his mouth with laughter and his lips with song, so that all who hate him shall be covered with shame.

On the whole what Bildad says is true enough. Where he errs is in supposing that he holds the whole truth, in assuming that there were not more things in heaven and earth than he had even dreamed of in his narrow philosophy. It is true that good comes to the good and evil to the evil; but it is also true that what is terribly evil in itself comes to the good, in order that it may conduct them to a larger and diviner good; and that what is most graciously and undeservedly good comes to

the evil, in order that they may be persuaded to renounce that which is evil and cleave to that which is good. Had he known this, Bildad would not have so hastily and harshly concluded either that the affliction of Job was the punishment of some unknown sin, or that the death of his children was the natural and inevitable result of some secret and untraceable guilt.

At the same time it is difficult to escape the impression that Bildad was a little disingenuous throughout his speech. In considering Verses 4-7 we saw that he veiled his entire conviction of the guilt of Job's children under hypothetical forms of speech; and in Verses 20-22 we find him hiding his conviction of Job's own guilt under similar forms. There can be no doubt that he was inwardly and entirely persuaded that the calamities which had fallen on Job were the consequence and the punishment of his sins; that he entertained little hope, no hope, for him until those sins were confessed and removed, for to that conclusion the whole drift of his argument steadily points; but he assumes a hope he does not really feel, and in a somewhat jaunty and insincere tone promises the afflicted patriarch a happy issue out of all his trials.

4. JOB TO BILDAD.

CHAPTERS IX. AND X.

Bildad had given new weight and edge to the accepted dogma of his time, that, in all the vicissitudes of their earthly lot, men receive the due reward of their deeds. Thinking, in Shakespeare's expressive language, to "patch grief with proverbs" he had adduced in proof of his thesis the sayings received by tradition from the sages of the antique world,— "with a little hoard of maxims preaching down a sufferer's heart." But Job resents this attempt to array against him the wisdom of antiquity. He refuses to be "proverbed with grandsire phrases." He flames out with the keenest indignation against the dogma which Bildad had supported with

ancient saws, of which he finds in Job a modern instance. He will have none of it. There is no comfort in it, and no truth.

In form, his reply to Bildad closely resembles his reply to Eliphaz: in both he first meets the argument of the Friends, and then, breaking away from the narrow round of thought in which they revolved, he pours out his very soul in impassioned expostulation and appeal to God, his real, though unseen, Antagonist. His answer to the argument of Bildad is twofold: first (Chap. ix. 2-21), he affirms that, even if it were true that the providence of God is strictly retributive, *that* would bring no comfort to him, since, however righteous he may be, it is impossible for man to prove and maintain his righteousness as against the Almighty: and, second (Chap. ix. 22-35), he affirms that this assumed law of Providence is not its true, or at least that it is not its sole, law, since experience shews that the guiltless and the guilty are destroyed alike. Chapter x. contains the passionate expostulation with God, which Job founds on the premisses he had laid down in Chapter ix.

CHAPTERS IX. AND X.

CHAP. IX. 1.—*Then answered Job and said :*

2. *Of a truth I know it is thus :*
 But how shall man be just with God ?
3. *Should he choose to contend with Him,*
 He cannot answer Him one charge of a thousand.
4. *Wise of heart and mighty in strength,*
 Who hath braved Him and been safe,
5. *Who removeth the mountains or ever they be aware,*
 Who overturneth them in his fury ;
6. *Who shaketh the earth out of her place,*
 So that her pillars rock ;
7. *Who commandeth the sun and it doth not shine,*
 And setteth his seal on the stars :
8. *Who alone boweth down the heavens,*
 And strideth on the heights of the sea :
9. *Maker of the Bear, the Giant, and the Cluster,*
 And the Chambers of the South :
10. *Doer of great things past finding out,*

- And wonders that cannot be numbered.
 11. Lo, He crosseth me, but I see Him not,
 And sweepeth past, but I do not discern Him.
 12. Lo, He snatcheth away ; who can withstand Him ?
 Who shall say to Him, " What doest thou ? "
 13. God restraineth not his fury,
 Even the haughtiest bow beneath it ;
 14. How much less can I answer Him,
 And choose out my words with Him
 15. To whom, though innocent, I would not reply ;
 I could but make supplication to my Adversary.
 16. Were I to call on Him, and He to answer me,
 I could not believe that He had hearkened to my voice ;
 17. For He breaketh me with tempest,
 And multiplieth my bruises without cause :
 18. He will not suffer me to fetch my breath,
 But surfeiteth me with bitterness.
 19. " Is it a trial of strength ? Here am I then !
 Is it a trial of right ? Who then will impeach me ? "
 20. Should I justify myself, my own mouth would condemn me.
 Should I say, " I am perfect," it would wrest my plea.
 21. Were I perfect, I should not know it,
 I should despise myself.
 22. It is all one ; therefore will I say it :
 The guiltless and the guilty He destroyeth alike.
 23. When the scourge slayeth suddenly,
 He laughs at the temptation of the innocent.
 24. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked ;
 He veileth the face of its judges :
 If not He, who then is it ?
 25. And my days are swifter than a courier ;
 They flit away ; they see no good :
 26. They shoot past like skiffs of reed,
 Like an eagle swooping on its prey !
 27. If I say, " I will forget my care,
 Leave my sad faces and look brightly,"
 28. I think with terror of all my woes :
 I know Thou wilt not clear me.
 29. If I must be guilty before Thee,
 Why should I weary myself in vain ?
 30. Were I to wash myself in snow-water
 And cleanse my hands with potash,
 31. Thou wouldest still plunge me into a ditch,
 So that my very garments should abhor me.

32. *For He is not a man as I am, whom I might answer,
That we should come together in judgment ;*
33. *There is no arbiter between us,
To lay his hand on us both,*
34. *Who would remove his rod from me,
So that the dread of Him should not overawe me :*
35. *If there were, I would speak and not fear Him,
For I know no cause to fear.*

CHAP. X. 1.

- I loathe my life !
I will give loose to my complaint ;
In the bitterness of my soul will I speak :*
2. *I will say unto God, " Do not condemn me ;
Shew me wherefore Thou contendest with me :*
3. *Is it meet that Thou shouldest oppress,
That Thou shouldest despise, the work of thy hands,
And shine on the council of the wicked ?*
4. *Hast Thou eyes of flesh,
Or seest Thou as man seeth ?*
5. *Are thy days as the days of man
And thy years as his years,
That Thou searchest after my fault
And makest inquisition for my sin,*
6. *Though Thou knowest I am not guilty,
And that none can deliver me out of thine hand ?*
7. *Thy hands have wholly fashioned and formed me,
Yet dost Thou swallow me up !*
8. *O remember that Thou hast moulded me like clay ;
And wilt Thou bring me to dust again ?*
9. *Didst not Thou pour me out like milk,
And curdle me like whey,
Clothe me with skin and flesh,
And with bones and sinews knit me together ?*
10. *Thou hast granted me life and favour,
And thy care hath guarded my breath :*
11. *But Thou wast hiding these evils in thine heart ;
That this was thy purpose I know.*
12. *Had I sinned, Thou wouldest have marked it
And not have absolved me from my guilt.*
13. *Had I done wickedly, alas for me !
Or were I righteous, I would not lift up my head,
Sated with shame and conscious of my misery ;*
14. *For should I uplift it, Thou wouldest hunt me like a lion,*

- And once more shew Thyself mighty upon me ;
 17. Thu wouldest bring fresh witnesses against me,
 And redouble thine anger at me,
 [Charging] with host on host against me.
18. Why didst Thou bring me forth from the womb ?
 Would that I had breathed my last and no eye had seen me !
19. O to have been as though I had not been,
 To have been carried from the womb to the grave !
20. Are not my days few ? Forbear then,
 And turn from me, that I may know some little comfort
21. Before I go, to return no more,
 Into the land of darkness and of the blackness of death,
22. A land of gloom, black as the blackness of death,
 Where there is no order, and the light is darkness."

Job commences his argument (*Chapter ix. Verses 2-4*) with an ironical admission of the law, or principle, for which Bildad had contended. "God is just? Of course He is! And favours the just? Of course He does! But if it were not so, how should any man prove himself in the right against an omnipotent Adversary? If, aggrieved by apparent injustice, he should wish to call God to account, he cannot answer one in a thousand of the subtle charges which infinite Wisdom might invent against him, or stand for a moment against the oppressions with which infinite Power might assail him."

As the thought of the power of his Divine Adversary rises before his mind, Job is fascinated by it; he cannot detach his mind from it, but passes into a description of the majesty of God, both in the natural and in the human world, which seems to have no bearing on his immediate purpose until we remember that, in the resistless power of God, he finds a proof of the utter helplessness of any attempt to vindicate himself when God chooses to contend with him. As he glances round the universe, looking for succour or for some suggestion of hope, he sees on every side the operations of a boundless and inscrutable Force, and this force that of Him who is turned to be his foe. How can he hope to stand against One who (*Verse 5*), instantly, unexpectedly, without note of warning, removes and overturns even the solid mountains from their

very base; who (*Verse 6*) convulses the trembling earth so that she leaps out of her place, and the very pillars on which she is built rock to and fro; who (*Verse 7*) intercepts the light of the sun with disastrous eclipse, so that it can no longer scatter its beams on the craving earth, and seals up the stars with dark rolling clouds, so that they no longer shine; who (*Verse 8*) blends sky and sea together in the wild tumult of the storm: and who afflicts the affrighted universe with the terrors of earthquake, eclipse, and tempest, not according to any steadfast and calculable law, nor for any beneficent purpose that men can trace, but simply because He strides through the universe in a causeless and capricious (*Verse 5*) "fury"? How can he, a frail and burdened man, hope to contend with, to exact justice from, the Great Maker of the starry constellations (*Verse 9*) which burn in the high vault of heaven?

And here he singles out for special notice the constellations known to the Hebrews as *âsh, kesîl, kimâh*, to us as the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades—the Bear a constellation of the northern, Orion of the southern, and the Pleiades of the eastern sky; and "the Chambers of the South," *i.e.* the vast spaces and starry groups of the unseen southern hemisphere, of which, as he has not seen them, he cannot speak more particularly.

In *Verse 10* he winds up his description of the Divine Majesty with a sentence taken from the lips of Eliphaz (Chap. v. 9),—

Doer of great things past finding out,
And wonders that cannot be numbered;

but, whereas Eliphaz had used the boundless and inscrutable power of God as an argument for his justice and beneficence, Job uses it to vindicate the utter hopelessness of withstanding Him, whether He be just or unjust, gracious or furious.

In *Verse 11*¹ Job passes from Nature to Man, he himself,

¹ *Verse 11*.—"Lo, he *crosseth* me." The Hebrew verb is ambiguous. Ewald translates it, "He goes by me;" Gesenius by "He assails me;" and it has long been debated whether the word should be taken in a general or in a hostile sense. By rendering the phrase, "He *crosseth* me," I have tried to preserve the ambiguity of the Original.

with his pains and wrongs, being the link of connection between the two, and proceeds to argue that in the human, as in the natural, world God is irresistible, inexplicable, at times even despotic.¹ It is impossible to strive with Him on fair and equal terms, impossible therefore to win a suit against Him, whatever the goodness of one's cause. Whether God be the appellant and take the initiative (Verses 12–15), or man (Verses 16–21), the issue is the same; by his mere power, apart from all questions of right, God must and does prevail: man has no chance against Him.

What Job feels in his own case (*Verse 11*) is that God makes his presence felt in the human lot, in his own lot, in precisely the same sudden, vague, and incomprehensible, the same capricious and destructive, way as in the physical universe. He is aware that God has been with him only by the traces of his anger, only by the cold obscuring shadows that attend Him, only by the calamities and miseries He leaves behind Him. He cannot see *Him*, nor discern the meaning of what He does. God *sweeps past* like the Spirit described by Eliphaz,² and produces the same profound impression of fear and mystery. Eliphaz may see a dim Shape and hear an oracular Voice; but for his part no such favour is accorded *him*; no form melts into and out of the air, no oracular hum or whisper is heard. Who can grapple and contend with an Opponent at once so impalpable and so mighty?

This impossibility, the impossibility of getting justice when the Almighty is one of the litigants, he elaborates in two brief dramatic scenes in which the Almighty is alternatively appellant and defendant. First (*Verses 12–15*), he takes God as the assailant, and complains that if the Almighty opens the attack, if He “snatches away” from man aught that is his, no resistance is possible, no remonstrance even, and all help is vain; his fury is not to be restrained or recalled. it sweeps on like a storm or an overflowing torrent which bears down all before it, and carries desolation in its track.

Verse 13.—“*Even the haughtiest bow beneath it*” is but

¹ Note especially *Verse 13*, and compare it with *Verse 5*.

² The same Hebrew word is used here and in Chapter iv. 15.

a poor rendering, a pale reflexion, of the Original. In the Hebrew there is either an historical or a mythological allusion which has not as yet been clearly recovered. Many Expositors render the phrase by "*Egypt and its allies*," or "*the allies of Egypt*," bow under it; for the literal rendering of the disputed phrase is "*the helpers of Rahab*"—Rahab being a Biblical and typical name for Egypt. And if that rendering be adopted, the allusion would be either to the discomfiture of Egypt and its political allies when the wrath of Jehovah was kindled against Pharaoh for refusing to let his people go; or to the powers of evil summoned to the help of Egypt by the enchantments of the magicians. But such an allusion to an historical event, and especially to an event of the Hebrew story, is alien to the spirit and manner of this Poem, which touches only on pre-Israelite events, only on the primeval and universal traditions of the race. It is better, therefore, to read "*the proud helpers*," or "*the helpers of pride*," or "*the haughtiest*;" in short, to adopt some general form of expression which conveys the thought that all who, in the pride and haughtiness of their hearts, interpose between the Almighty and the objects of his displeasure court an assured overthrow. Even this reading, however, rests in all probability on an obscure allusion, the exact force of which we cannot yet determine, to a primeval tradition which obtained throughout the ancient East. The germ of it is found in all Oriental literatures, and is fully developed both in the Hindoo and the Egyptian mythologies. In substance it is to the effect that some arch-rebel, some personified principle of evil, some such personage, in short, as the Satan of the Prologue, aided by a great company of "helpers," or "allies"—what we call "the devil and his angels"—broke out into mutiny against God, or the gods; that these powers and principalities of darkness long maintained their warfare against the Powers of light and righteousness, but either were, or are yet to be, finally and irrevocably overthrown. It is pretty generally admitted by the latest and most learned Expositors that there is an allusion in Job's words to these "spiritual wickednesses in high places;" but to convey that allusion in any sufficiently terse and pregnant phrase, which shall not mislead the reader, is a feat not yet accomplished.

Verses 14, 15.—But if these mighty and monstrous powers of darkness could not cope with the Maker of the stars, how shall Job contend with Him? how confute his arguments and rebut his pleas? However innocent he may be, and however conscious of his innocence, he could not argue with *Him* as with an equal; he could only hope to move so powerful an Adversary by humbling himself before Him, by asking grace, not by claiming rights.

In *Verses 16–20* Job works out his second conception of God as *defendant in a suit*. He assumes, not that God advances some claim on him, but that he asserts a claim on God. “If,” he says, “strong in the conviction of the righteousness of my claim, I should venture to enforce it, if I were to cite Him into court, and He were to come, I could not believe that He had come at my summons, or that He would listen calmly to my pleas. No; enraged by my audacity, He would come in a whirlwind, come to multiply my bruises till I could not fetch my breath, come to riot and exult in the consciousness of irresistible irresponsible power—as who should say, ‘Aha, aha; you have challenged me! Is it to a trial of strength? Here I am! Is it on a question of right? Who will dare impeach *Me!*’—so that, confused and overborne, my own mouth would stammer out my condemnation, and, knowing myself to be guiltless, I should nevertheless confess myself to be guilty.”

Verse 21 is so abrupt and broken an utterance that it is difficult to determine its meaning and connection of thought. Literally rendered it runs: “*I perfect; I know not my soul; I loathe my life.*” Some interpret these sighs thus: “I am perfect or guiltless; it may cost me my life to assert my innocence, but I do not know,” *i.e.* do not value, “my soul” or life,—I do not set my life at a pin’s fee, as Hamlet phrases it: “nay, I loathe my life, and reckon not how soon I lose it. Therefore I *will* assert my innocence, come what may.” Others, and as I think with more reason, regard this Verse as an expansion of Verse 20, and read it as meaning: “Were I never so innocent, I should not care to assert my innocence, since God with his infinite subtlety would be able to wrest from my very plea charges which I could not refute,

so that I should stand in doubt of myself. Therefore, I loathe my very life, and would fain be quit of it."

But whatever may be the sense of Verse 21, there can be no doubt that in *Verse 22* Job shifts his ground. Hitherto he has been arguing that even if Bildad's doctrine of retributive Providence were true, it would yield him no comfort; now he argues that the doctrine itself is questionable and even untrue. Of what use was it for him to stand up for his innocence when the guilty and the guiltless were alike destroyed by the very Providence of whose equity Bildad had boasted? Obviously the sense of his own impotence when contrasted with the omnipotence of God has driven him desperate for the moment. He is even conscious of his own recklessness, as we may see from the opening words of the Verse: "It is all one," *i.e.* "It is all one to me whether I live or die; and therefore I will say out openly that, so far from preserving the good and punishing the wicked, God strikes indiscriminately at good and bad alike, both equally fall before the fury of his power." A terrible saying; and yet is it not true to those who cannot see beyond the verge of the grave? Is it not true that, as God causeth his rain to fall and his sun to shine on the just and on the unjust, so also "the same fate befallerh the righteous and the wicked?"¹ A terrible saying; and yet it is followed by sayings still more terrible. For, in *Verse 23*, Job affirms that when any indiscriminating scourge—as famine, or pestilence, or war—falls alike on bad and good, God is not simply indifferent; He "laughs," laughs scornfully and derisively, at "the temptation" to distrust and despair which this grave injustice quickens in the heart of the righteous. Nay, more; in *Verse 24* he affirms that God puts the righteous at an absolute disadvantage as compared with the unrighteous, giving over the earth into the hand of the wicked, committing the administration of public justice to men whose faces He has veiled so that they cannot discern between good and evil, so that they aggravate the misery of an inequitable Providence by legalizing oppression and wrong, "framing mischief by a law."

¹ Ecclesiastes ix. 2.

There may be an afterthrob of misgiving in the final clause of the verse: "If not He, who then is it?" as if Job, looking on the universal scene of injustice with baffled intellect and bewildered eyes, and feeling that the fact of injustice was undeniable, suddenly demanded of himself whether it could be traced to any other source, whether any one but God could be made responsible for it; but most Commentators are agreed that the clause is to be taken simply as an assertion that *only* God could be answerable for the prevalence of wrong and misery, since only He could possibly have produced or permitted it on so large a scale.

And this conclusion seems confirmed by the Verses which follow. For now Job once more singles himself out from the throng of men and adduces himself as an instance and proof of the moral disorder and inequity of human life. In *Verses* 25 and 26 he compares his life to that which is swiftest on land, on water, and in the air; to the courier posting with his despatches in breathless haste, to the light papyrus skiff¹ skimming over the surface of the stream, and to the eagle swooping on its prey. Yet, brief as his life is, it has been cut short, it has been withered in its prime, so that he is both hopeless of any future happiness and denied even a moment's respite from his misery.

Bildad (Chapter viii. 21 and 22) had suggested that brighter days, days of mirth and prosperity, might yet compensate him for his sufferings. But Job despairingly replies to these suggestions of hope, that he dare not yield to them. If (*Verses* 27-29) he does cherish such bright gleams for an instant, they darken and die away in a new access of agony. A moment's reflection suffices to convince him that, since God has determined to hold him guilty, his mourning will never

¹ The Hebrew word for "swift *ships*," or "*skiffs* of reeds," occurs only in this passage. It is probably a foreign word with which our Poet enriched his language. A kindred word (*abutu*), which also means ships or boats, is found on the Deluge tablets and elsewhere in the Assyrian inscriptions; but probably, as a kindred word in Arabic indicates, it means light boats constructed of papyrus reeds, such canoes as were made on the Nile, and so made as to fold together that they might be the more easily carried past the cataracts.

be exchanged for joy. Why, then, should he weary himself with vain endeavours to alter the unalterable, because causeless, determination of God? Why "trouble deaf heaven with his bootless cries?" If he *must* be guilty before Him, to what end shall he seek to purge himself of his unknown offence, or even to refute a baseless allegation? His feeling is,—

It will help me nothing
To plead mine innocence; for that dye is on me
Which makes my whitest part black:

and in *Verses 30 and 31* he expresses this feeling under the most homely but emphatic figures. "A stronger cleansing effect is attributed to snow than to ordinary water. In Lockman's fable the black man rubs his body with snow in order to make it white."¹ "Potash," again, is a vegetable lye, or alkali, still used in the East. Palgrave, in "Central Arabia," says: "After dinner we washed our hands with potash, or *kalee* (whence our own 'alkali'), the ordinary cleanser of Nejed." But Job is persuaded that even should he wash with snow-water and potash, even, that is, should he betake himself to the most extreme and effective methods of self-purification, he shall never be pure in God's sight,—not because of any extraordinary guilt on his part, but because of the strange inexplicable determination of God to hold him guilty. However he might seek to cleanse himself, God would instantly plunge him into some filthy ditch, so that his very clothes would conceive a disgust of him and shrink from contact with one so vile.

Even in this extremity of his misery, then, Job holds fast his integrity; but, in order that he may hold it fast, he is driven to an open impeachment of the integrity of God. A great gulf has opened between him and his Divine Friend; and, though he still craves it and searches for it, he can find no bridge by which he may cross that gulf. It is when he is thus reduced to despair that, not a prophetic vision or hope, but an aspiration hardly less prophetic rises within his soul for a mediator between God and man, a bridge, or ladder,

¹ Umbreit *in loco*.

between earth and heaven. Borne down by that "bosom weight which no philosophy can lift," he cries for an aid beyond the reach of reason and speculation; he craves a distinct disclosure of the will of God, a revelation, if not an incarnation, of the Divine righteousness and love: he yearns for an "Arbiter" who can lay his hands on both God and man, who shall have a human face, so that Job may speak to him unabashed, but also a Divine face, so that he may speak to God for Job without fear or partiality. It is this aspiration which gives its immense value to the famous passage contained in *Verses 32-35*. Job feels himself to be

a thing perplexed
Beyond self-explication.

He can neither interpret himself, nor can the Friends, although among the wisest men of the East, interpret him to himself. God—for surely it can be no one else?—has "struck him past all hope of comfort," struck him from "the top of happy hours" on which he lately stood, to the very depths of misery and despair. And yet he is conscious of no offence in himself which should have provoked so dreadful a doom. Like Lear, a "poor, infirm, and despised old man," he can say,

I am a man
More sinned against than sinning.

How is he to reconcile his consciousness of integrity with his undeserved misery? To what quarter is he to look for light on this dark problem? We have already seen in part how his eager intellect had gone sounding on through words and things a dim and perilous way, seeking some solution of the problem till, in moments of intense passion and excitement, it seemed to land him in the conclusion that God must be unjust, hostile to the good and friendly to evil men. But what comfort can there be in that conclusion to any good, or even to any thoughtful, man? If God be unjust, life is a curse, not a blessing, and he is happiest who can soonest escape from it. And therefore Job cannot *rest* in this conclusion, though he sinks into it again and again. Even when he is most vehement and reckless in his denunciation of the

injustice of God and the consequent worthlessness of human life, some sudden turn of thought, a few calmer words, prove that this is not his final conclusion, that he feels it to be untrue even while he most hotly affirms its truth.

Here, for example, in the closing Verses of this Chapter, though he has just portrayed a God who is a mere irrational and despotic Force, slaying guiltless and guilty alike in his capricious fury, mocking at the trials of the innocent, handing over the world into the power of wicked judges who tyrannize over the righteous, we are made to feel that this blind malignant Power is not really Job's God at all, but a mere phantom projected by his diseased and inflamed imagination against the dark background of his Friends' dogmatic prepossessions: for he is still sure that *his* God, if he could but get at Him, would not prove to be unjust but just, not a blind Force, or a capricious Despot, but a righteous and gracious Friend. Hence he longs (*Verse 32*) to have God *humanized*, to see Him in a human form, and is evidently persuaded that, could he see God in man, he and God might "come together in judgment." If that may not be, if God cannot stoop to the human level, he craves (*Verse 33*) for an Arbiter, or Mediator, who should be able to "lay his hand on both" God and man, —not touch them both simply, that is, but be able to compel whichever of the two he thought in the wrong to do the other right; who should have authority to enforce his decision whatever it might be. But how shall any being have authority with God unless he be a partaker of the Divine Nature? What Job really craves, therefore, is a Mediator who shall be "partaker of God," since he is to have power with and over God, and "partaker of man," that man may speak to him without fear.

So much, indeed, he himself tells us in *Verse 34*; for the Umpire, or Mediator, for whose advent he yearns is to be capable of removing "the rod" of Almighty power, by which Job has been so horribly bruised, that he may no longer be struck dumb by fear of it. Were such a Mediator to stand between them, with his hand on both, Job would fearlessly urge his integrity and the claims that it gave him on God: "*for,*" he subjoins (*Verse 35*), "*I know no cause for fear;*"

literally, "I am not so with, or in, myself;" *i.e.* "I am conscious of nothing in myself that should make me dumb or afraid, were only a fair trial and an impartial judge accorded me."¹

Now to insist on seeing the whole Gospel in this noble passage would not only be to shew ourselves unreasonable and destitute of either historical or critical judgment, it would also be to discharge from it its true power and value. A hazy and hypothetical anticipation of the Gospel is of little worth to those who have the Gospel itself in their hands; but any passage in ancient writings which proves that man was made for the Gospel, by proving that the Gospel corresponds to and satisfies a deep, inbred, and ineradicable craving of the human heart, is simply quite invaluable, especially in a critical and sceptical age such as this. Even those who never weary of telling us that Christ "carried morality to the sublimest point attained, or even attainable, by humanity,"² qualify and emasculate the admission by affirming both that his moral teaching was only "the perfect development of natural morality," *i.e.* that it sprang from the brain of a man and not from the inspiration of God, and that this fair morality will never take its proper place in our thoughts, or exert its due influence on the life of the world, until we give up all faith in the supernatural inspiration of his words and in the miracles He is supposed to have wrought. Nor, they tell us, do we lose anything of value, but rather "gain" quite "infinitely," by resigning the dubious hypothesis of a supernatural revelation, and by holding all that is miraculous in it to be a late and incredible addition to the true story of the Gospel.³

The masters of this same sceptical school are the first to censure any reading of Christian meanings into such scriptures as the Book of Job, the first to insist that we shall take them in their plain historical sense and as the mere utterance of the thoughts and cravings of the human heart unilluminated and unassisted by any immediate light from Heaven. And we thank them for it, both in the interests of Biblical criticism

¹ For a corresponding idiom compare the Greek of 1 Cor. iv. 4.

² "Supernatural Religion," vol. ii. part iii. chap. iii.

³ See Introduction, page 19.

and in the interests of our great contention with them, since they thus enable us to answer them out of their own mouths. We admit that Job had no direct and supernatural revelation of the will and purpose of God, that he only longed and yearned for one. We admit that, in this passage, he uttered no clear prophetic anticipation of the advent of the Mediator between God and men, but only the profound craving of his heart for such a Mediator. But, then, what becomes of their argument? They contend that if man has a pure and noble morality, he needs no supernatural revelation of the will of God, no Mediator to interpret God to man and to reconcile man to God. But, beyond all dispute, Job had a pure and noble morality—a morality which was even Christian in its breadth and delicacy, its tenderness and patience.¹ Does *he* feel that he is an infinite gainer because he has no Divine Revelation, and no God-man such as “the Christian superstition” has vainly conceived? On the contrary Job, like Plato, was profoundly sure that he should never know God as he needed to know Him until some man or spirit was sent to reveal God to his longing soul. On the contrary, the craving which gave him no rest was precisely that which we are told it was impossible for him to know—the craving for a Divine Revelation, and for a Mediator through whom God should draw near to man no longer “dark with excess of light,” but veiling his majesty in mortal limitations that men might draw near to Him unafraid. And one of the most pertinent uses which this great Poem can subserve for the men of this generation is, that it disproves the sceptical hypothesis once for all, and in its most scientific form, by proving that the craving to see God and to hear Him speak to us is one of the primitive, inherent, and deepest intuitions and necessities of the human heart. No student of Job can well believe that anything short of a supernatural revelation, and a mediator both human and Divine, can satisfy the needs of such a creature as man in such a world as this.

Chapter ix. contains Job's real reply to Bildad. Bildad had argued that God was and must be just, that his provi-

¹ For the proof of this assertion see Chapters xxix. and xxxi. of the Poem.

dence was simply and purely retributive; and that no man therefore, whatever he might suffer, could have any right to complain, since he did but receive the due reward of his deeds. Job, as we have seen, traverses this argument, first by ironical assent, and then by open and hot denial. First he says, "O, of course God must be right, because He is so strong. It is vain to contend with the master of so many legions." And then he says, "Nevertheless I will not admit your dogma, for it is not true. So far from rendering to every man the due recompense of his deeds, He condemns the guiltless to the fate of the guilty, mocks at the dismay of the righteous and hands them over to the tyranny of the wicked. It is *not* because I am guilty that I suffer, but because He has unjustly determined to hold me guilty, and to treat me as though my guilt were too notorious to need proof."

Thus, driven desperate by the collision between his own clear sense that he is innocent, and the fact that he is treated as though he were guilty, he breaks out into what an old writer stigmatizes as *inferni blasphemias*. But no candid and reflective reader will now repeat that charge. He will remember that

to be wroth with one we love
Doth work like madness in the brain;

and that, despite his passionate reproaches, Job did love God still, and believe Him to be just, if only he could discern his true meaning and aim, is evident from the closing verses of the Chapter. For here he longs to have God humanized—"a man as I am, whom I might answer;" if that cannot be, he longs for a Mediator who shall be able to interpret God to him, and to intercede for him with God. But if he no longer believed in the justice and goodness of God, why should he crave a manifestation of God, or care to renew the broken links of communion with Him? No, Job utters no blasphemy, and still less any "infernal blasphemy;" for does not Jehovah Himself affirm at the close of the drama that, on the whole, Job had spoken of Him aright? But for a while he is wroth with the God He loves, wroth with Him because He is hiding Himself from him behind an impenetrable veil of mystery; and his wrath works like madness in his brain.

And when the Father of our spirits hides Himself from his children for a while, to test our courage or to chasten and nerve our hearts, thus exposing us to the most terrible fears, misgivings, and perplexities, He is not likely to take the pitiful cries and upbraidings which shew how truly we love and confide in Him very much amiss.

We shall need to bear this thought in mind as we proceed to consider the keen and passionate expostulation with God into which Job, forgetting Bildad and his argument, forgetting the Friends and their grave looks of censure, rises in *Chapter x.*

In *Verse 1* we have the sighs, or sobs, of despair which introduce the Expostulation. Job had just expressed the yearning of his spirit for a Mediator with whom he could plead his suit unabashed, since, being innocent, he had no cause for fear. But he knows this yearning cannot, or will not, be gratified; that no Arbiter will step forth, that he must still deal with a God who has prejudged the case and condemned before He has heard him. Was ever man in a sorer strait? He is innocent; but none the less he is treated as though culpable of the most enormous crimes. He is innocent, but God will not hear of his being innocent: and how is he to prove it before a Judge who has long since given sentence against him and left his seat? The thought unmans, overwhelms him, and he cries, "I loathe my life!" or, literally, "My soul is sick of my life." As no other relief is open to him, he resolves to give vent to the bitterness of his soul.

But this resolve introduces no extravagance of passion, no reckless and insolent declamation. On the contrary, it is evident that Job is still brooding over the attitude which God has assumed toward him, trying to account for it in divers ways, and that he tacitly rejects supposition after supposition, simply because he feels it to be unworthy of the great Ruler of the world. In *Verse 2* he makes supplication to his Judge, instead of raving against his injustice. "Do not condemn me," he cries; that is, Do not condemn me without cause; do not fasten an undeserved guiltiness upon me. Obviously he is recalling what he had said about God's determination to hold him guilty, however innocent he might be, and entreating God to revoke it, beseeching Him at least to tell him on

what charge he is condemned, and to give him a chance of proving himself innocent of it. In *Verses* 3–7 he frames hypothesis after hypothesis to account for the enmity which God has conceived against him, only to reject them as fast as they are framed. First, he asks, Is it becoming, is it in keeping with the character of God, is it consistent with what the universe has a right to expect of Him, that He should oppress and despise the creature whom He Himself has formed? Nay, that cannot be; for how should God hate his own workmanship? Well, then, if that cannot be, can it be that God has merely human eyes, that He may be deceived by the mere appearance of innocence or guilt, deluded by the hypocrisies by which men betray their fellow-men? No, neither can that be:

It is not so with Him that all things knows
As 'tis with us who square our guess by shows:

God looks not at the outward appearance, but on the heart. But if that be impossible, is it to be supposed that the life of God is as brief as that of man,¹ so that He cannot wait till the sinful impulses and intentions of Job develop themselves in overt acts, but must put him to an instant torture that He may compel him to confess them or even to accuse himself of treasonable intents which he has never cherished? No, neither can that be. God knows well enough that he is not guilty, and that, even if he were, he should never be able to elude the pursuit and stroke of justice. In fine, brood over it how he will, turn it which way he will, he can find no solution of the problem, though he feels that there must be some solution of it, could he but reach it. And so once more he turns to God, and expostulates with Him, submitting this strange

¹ I have translated *Verse* 5,—

Are thy days as the days of man,
And thy years as *his* years?

but in the Original the word “man” is repeated, but repeated with a difference which cannot be conveyed in a mere translation. The two Hebrew words used for “man” in this Verse are *enosh* and *geber*; *enosh* denoting man in his weakness, “frail man;” *geber* denoting man in his strength: the former word being associated with the weaker term “days,” and the latter with the stronger “years.”

problem to *Him*, and intending to ask Him how *He* solves it. But from this nascent intention, as we shall see in a moment, he is diverted by a sudden suspicion which cuts so sharply on his heart that he is shaken out of all composure, and his pensive meditation frets and rages into the mere frenzy of despair.

Verses 8-12 are an expansion of the phrase, "the work of thy hands," used in Verse 3. Tenderly and pensively Job recalls the loving care and skill which God has expended on him, fashioning and forming every separate organ and faculty of a frame so fearfully and wonderfully made, conducting the whole process of his development from the moment of his conception onward,¹ moulding him like some exquisite vase on which the artist lavishes his utmost skill, and then guarding so rare a masterpiece with unceasing care, and eyeing it with looks of pride and favour. As he recalls these instances of the Divine regard, he beseeches God to recall them too, that the memory of his former grace may blunt the edge of his present displeasure; and asks with blended incredulity and astonishment whether it can really be God's purpose to break in pieces a work on which He has lavished so much thought and skill, to destroy a creature whom He has guarded with so much love and care? His argument with God is: Does the potter mould a vessel only to dash it to pieces? And hast Thou moulded me of clay only to bring me to dust again? Incredible, impossible!

But here a terrible suspicion darts into his mind, confuses its clear action, clouds and poisons his thoughts. As if to shew how true it is, and in how many ways it may be true "that a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things," while Job is brooding with thoughtful tenderness and

¹ The development of the embryo is often cited by the Hebrew poets as one of the most sacred and wonderful of mysteries; *e.g.*, in Psalm cxxxix. 13-16, and Ecclesiastes xi. 5. Here the generation and formation of the embryo, and the gradual development of the fœtus, are described with physiological minuteness and accuracy. No marvel that this mystery bulked so large in their thoughts if, as there is much reason to believe, it was to their minds the concrete form of a problem by which the most capable and penetrating minds of the present day are exercised, viz., the origin and genesis of *life*.

soft regret on the many and varied tokens he had received of the Divine love and favour in that earlier time when "he had a daily beauty in his life," all these soft chords of memory are harshly jangled out of tune by the misgiving, which instantly ripens into a conviction, that from the very first God was plotting against his peace; that his apparent love and favour were but a disguise behind which He was hiding his true purpose; that he, Job, had been led on by a hand of seeming grace only that he might be entrapped and whelmed in boundless miseries, and that his present agony of loss and shame and perplexity might be the more dreadful to him from its contrast with the happier things and days which had preceded it. And so, in *Verse 13*, he turns on God with the exceeding bitter cry, "Thou hast granted me life and favour, indeed, and carefully guarded my breath,"

*But Thou wast hiding these evils in thine heart;
That this was thy purpose I know.*

Can we wonder that the miserable man eagerly caught at this miserable suggestion? It seemed the only possible explanation of God's way with him. To explain that way, and, if possible to vindicate it, was the prime necessity of his position, the profoundest yearning of his soul. We have just overheard him (*Verses 5-7*) inventing, and rejecting, first this explanation and then that. But now, though he knows not in what particular thought to work, in the gross and scope of his opinion *this* is what it all means: God has been hiding a real hatred for him behind the shows of love, and this hatred has at last broken through its disguise. He was consciously the same man now that he had always been—as just, as generous, as devout. There had been no change in him; and yet what a change in God! Formerly God had been all grace and bounty to him; now He is all austerity and displeasure. Which was God's real and abiding attitude toward him—the former or the latter? The favour of God had passed like a dream when one awaketh; it was transient, unsubstantial, evanescent, a mere simulation and disguise; but his displeasure, and the misery it bred, were not these real enough, and enduring? Had they not already stricken

his soul with an incurable wound? Oh, it was a plot! a base plot! and yet a plot carried through with the most consummate skill.

The suspicion was a natural one; and Job suffers it to creep into the study of his imagination, and dwells on it, seeking to trace it through all its ramifications. To his morbid and inflamed consciousness (*Verses 14-17*) this deep Divine plot assumes the form of a trilemma, a frightful three-fold "net, which would ensnare and capture the victim whichever way he might turn." (1) Were he to sin in some common, current, and almost venial way, God had determined to mark *in him* a sin that He would have passed by in any other man, and never to absolve him from the guilt of it. (2) Were he to "do wickedly," *i.e.*, to fall into some heinous and unusual sin, God had determined to inflict on him a punishment so terrible that words cannot utter it, and Job, as he thinks of it, can only ejaculate, "Alas for me!" or, "Woe above all woe on me!"—an exclamation keenly expressive of the soul-subduing dread with which he contemplates it. (3) Even were he free from all sin, forensically guiltless, he must not dare to lift up his head, to walk erect, to carry himself as one conscious of his integrity, but must rather demean himself like a criminal, sated with shame and conscious of misery; for should he lift up his head, should he assert his integrity, God would spring on him like a lion, who only watches for the first movement of his prey and strikes it as it moves: nay, even this figure cannot fully render the peril and the misery of his condition; and therefore he compares himself, not only to the prey of a beast of prey, but also to a culprit who only redoubles the anger of his adversary by every attempt at defence, and incites him to call fresh witnesses against him; and to a besieged city, or fort, every sally of which is but a signal for new reserves of force to be brought up against it.

Deeming himself to be caught past all hope of succour or escape in the stifling folds of this detestable net, and remembering Who it is that has woven it and flung it around him, Job once more sinks, as we might expect, into his lowest and blackest mood of despair. In *Verses 18-22* he repeats

the cry, or curse, recorded in Chapter iii. Of that cry from the depths of an undivine despair, he had once been ashamed, confessing (Chap. vi. 3) that his words had been "wild," pleading only that they had been wrung from him by the intolerable weight and pressure of his misery. But now he adopts that bitter cry as expressing his reasoned and deliberate conclusion. He has considered all that the Friends have alleged, all that his own lingering faith and love can suggest; and the conviction has been forced home upon him that the conditions of human life are so capricious, so cruel and inexplicable, as to render it a curse, and to justify him in execrating it and longing to exchange it for death. It is impossible, I think, to compare these Verses with "the Curse" and not to feel that Job is now expressing calmly and deliberately the very conclusion which he there flung out in a torrent of wild and wind-driven speech. It is the voice of reflection that we now hear, and not the voice of passion; but it utters the selfsame loathing of life, the selfsame yearning for death. And now it touches us far more intimately and profoundly. There is a tragic force and pathos in such a phrase as

O, to have been as though I had not been!

of which we are the more sensible because of the severe simplicity of its form and the quiet self-restraint of its tone: it impresses us far more deeply than the wild shrieks and execrations of the Curse, for it comes from depths so profound that they are still. His craving for death is the more terrible when we see, as he enables us to see (*Verses* 21 and 22), his conception of the estate of the dead. As he conceives them they are poor thin ghosts, wandering for ever in a sad and obscure under-world so dark that he accumulates nearly all the Hebrew epithets for darkness, each with its peculiar terror,¹ in order to depict it; a dim and dolorous Hadean world, sunk below the pendant earth, suffused at the best with what Milton, following Job, describes as "not light, but darkness visible;" and if the light that is in it be darkness, how great must be the darkness! That Job should prefer such a death

¹ Comp. on Chap. iv. 10 and 11, and Chap. vi. 15-20.

as this to such a life as his implies the extremity of misery and despair to which he is now reduced by the suspicion that God had always hated him, although He had long concealed his hatred behind a show of love. And in this Chapter "he speaks" to God "as he doth ruminate, and gives his worst of thoughts the worst of words." Compared with Job's deep and generous despair, much of the modern pessimism, which is for ever asking "Is life worth living?" is but a shallow affectation, though it is loud-mouthed enough, and, at times, very much too foul of tongue.

5. ZOPHAR TO JOB.

CHAPTER XI.

The last and least worthy of Job's opponents now enters the field against him. Eliphaz, as we have seen, was a man of a prophetic spirit, basing himself on oracles and visions. Bildad was a sage, an earlier rabbi, a man of a patristic spirit, leaning on tradition, loving and apt at citing the wisdom of the ancients. But Zophar's distinction is that there is little or nothing to distinguish him from the ordinary good man of his day. He is not a man of culture and erudition, like Bildad; and still less is he, like Eliphaz, a man in close and immediate correspondence with Heaven. He stands for and utters the common thought, the current conceptions and formulæ of his time, and savours of bigotry, as self-styled orthodoxy is wont to do. Having no root in himself, no familiar acquaintance with the voice of Wisdom, no Divine vision on which to fall back, he is compelled to assert himself the more. He catches up the opinions in vogue, and delivers them as *his* opinions, with a voice of authority. He cannot quote oracles with Eliphaz; nevertheless, perhaps therefore, there is a touch of "Sir Oracle" about him, and "when he opes his mouth" he expects his decision, since most of his neighbours concur in it, to be final. With singular fidelity to nature, this comparatively unlearned and unspiritual champion

of accepted traditions is described as harsh, authoritative, sudden and loud in censure, especially when he censures men who think more deeply and broadly than himself, and with a very keen eye for their sins. He is "hasty and tinderlike upon too trivial motion." "A very little thief of occasion robs him of a great deal of patience." In this very Chapter, for example, he virtually or expressly calls Job, "windbag," "babblers," "empty-pate," "a wild ass's colt;" and implies that his hand is smirched with iniquity, his face foul with ignominy, and his tent defiled by wickedness. He assumes that Job is suffering for some undivulged crime, and affirms, even in the face of *that* bitter agony and despair, that his pangs are fewer than his crimes and lighter than his guilt; yet has he nothing to go upon, even in his own breast, but "imputation and strong circumstance, which," as he supposes, "lead directly to the door of truth."

To treat men of this spirit and temper fairly is very hard. But we should be almost as unjust as Zophar himself were we not to remember that he is resenting no personal wrong, but what he conceives to be a wrong against God, and a wrong likely to have the most injurious effects on the theology, the religious conceptions and beliefs, of his age. He feels, feels quite sincerely, that in Job's new and strange conceptions

the antique and well-noted face
Of plain old form is much disfigured;
And like a shifted wind unto a sail,
It makes the course of thought to fetch about,
Startles and frights consideration,
Makes sound opinion sick, and truth suspected;

he fears that to have truth suspected may be to have truth denied and disobeyed; and he is sure that, should sound opinion grow sick, the health of men's souls will be imperilled and undermined. His motive, therefore, is as worthy of respect as his manner and temper are of blame. Perhaps, too, we may infer from the fact that he speaks last in the Conference, that he is the youngest of the Friends, since so much deference was paid to age in the East that the elder men would be almost sure to take precedence of the younger. And in that case some allowance must be made for his

diminished opportunities of thought and experience. In that case, too, he forms a capital contrast to Elihu; for while Zophar stands up, with the zeal and asperity of youth, for the old and familiar forms of truth, Elihu utters the new conceptions which were working in the younger men of the tribes, and which, as we shall hereafter see, were a real and considerable advance even on the views held by men so wise and meditative as Job and Eliphaz. In any case Zophar is a welcome, and even a necessary, figure in the scene; for how should the drama be complete unless there were at least one actor in it to represent the common and accepted notions of the day, the conceptions and dogmas by which the lives of the vast majority of men were shaped? Eliphaz is to some extent raised above the ordinary run of men by his trances and visions, Bildad by his learning and erudition; but the unschooled, dogmatic, positive Zophar is one of themselves.

What, then, has Job said or done to make him so keen and hot in censure? in what has this "pattern of all patience" offended against the current dogmas of the time? He has offended against them in three ways, which yet are one. Eliphaz and Bildad had laid down the popular dogma when they had affirmed the retributive character of the Divine Providence, and had maintained that God was just on the sole ground that He meted out to every man the exact reward of his deeds. And Job had traversed this dogma, (1) by insisting on his own innocence when his very sufferings were an open proof of his guilt; (2) by asserting that God was so strong that no man, however righteous his cause, could hope to maintain that cause against Him; and (3) by affirming that in the common experience of mankind, and not only in his own experience, the wicked often passed their days in mirth and affluence, while the good were smitten with incurable griefs and despired. He had been guilty, therefore, of a threefold impeachment of the accepted dogma. And that it was this dogma which he impeached, that it was God as the Friends conceived Him rather than God as He is in Himself, is put beyond doubt by the fact that his impeachment culminated in an ardent desire and demand that God would appear to him in some approachable form, and give him an

opportunity of vindicating his integrity; for such a desire could only spring from a profound conviction that God was just, and would do justice, if only he knew where to find Him. Still it is easy to see how much there was in Job's attitude and words to provoke the resentment of a shallow and dogmatic retailer of the current truisms such as Zophar. To hear his most cherished opinions thus rudely called in question, was like having the very ground on which he stood, and from which it was impossible for him to move, cut from beneath his feet. No wonder he was angry, and thought he did well to be angry. Yet there is some method in his anger; for, after a brief rebuke of Job's empty and windy babbling, he keeps very fairly to the lines of thought which Job had pursued—the pervading sentiment of his argument being, however, the admonitory one,

You are transported by calamity
Thither where more attends you.

He expresses a wish that Job's desire to see God for himself may be granted, and is sure that, if it be granted, his claim to innocence will be utterly refuted. He meets Job's attack on the equity of Divine Providence by asserting that its seeming inequalities arise simply from its unsearchableness and the incapacity of man to comprehend and interpret it aright. And he exhorts Job to repentance both by promises of good and threatenings of ill.

This is the general drift of Zophar's argument. Let us now observe how he works it out in detail.

CHAPTER XI.

1. *Then answered Zophar the Naamathite and said :*
2. *Shall a multitude of words not be answered,
 And shall a babbler be justified ?*
3. *Shall men let thy vaunts pass in silence,
 So that thou mock with none to shame thee*
4. *And say, " My discourse is pure,
 And I am clean in thine eyes " ?*
5. *O that God would speak,
 And open his lips with thee,*

6. *And tell thee the secrets of wisdom—
For fold over fold is his counsel :*
So shouldest thou know that God remembereth not all thy guilt.
7. *Wouldest thou sound the depth of God ?
Wouldest thou reach to the perfection of the Almighty ?*
8. *High as heaven ! what canst thou do ?
Deeper than Hades ! what canst thou know ?*
9. *The measure thereof is longer than the earth,
And broader than the sea !*
10. *If He arrest, and imprison, and hold assize,
Who shall oppose Him ?*
11. *For He knoweth evil men,
And seeth iniquity when He seemeth not to regard it.*
12. *But vain man is void of understanding,
Yea, man is a wild ass's colt from his birth.*
13. *But thou, if thou apply thine heart
And stretch forth thy hands to Him,*
14. *Should iniquity be in thy hand, put it far away,
And let not wickedness dwell in thy tent ;*
15. *So shalt thou lift up thy face without spot ;
Thou shalt stand firm, and shalt not fear :*
16. *For thou shalt forget thy misery,
Or remember it as waters that have dried up :*
17. *And a day brighter than noon shall arise ;
If darkness come, it shall be as the dawn :*
18. *And thou shalt take courage because there is hope ;
Thou shalt look around, and lie down in safety :*
19. *Thou shalt rest, and none shall affright thee ;
Yea, many shall make suit to thee.*
20. *But the eyes of the wicked shall pine away,
Refuge shall perish from them,
And their hope shall be like a last breath.*

Verses 2-4.—In Zophar's judgment, Job should have been silenced by the arguments of Eliphaz and Bildad ; but, instead of bowing to their exposition of the popular creed, he has grown more and more unreasonable, talks more and more wildly, and has involved himself in a mere cloud of words in order that he may evade the force of their arguments and rebukes. He is "a babbler"—literally, "a man of lips," a man who, as Carlyle phrases it, "speaks from the teeth outward," and does not utter the secrets of his breast. It is

impossible to let his "vaunts" about his personal innocence, his "big talk," pass unrebuked, and leave him to "mock" on—i.e. to impugn the providence of God rashly, sceptically, with a bias or prejudice against it. If he were so left, he would conclude that his "doctrine" or "discourse," i.e. the position he had assumed in this great debate, was conceded, and that he had proved his integrity.

In *Verses* 5 and 6 he takes up Job's yearning to see God for himself, and to come together in judgment with him (Chap. ix. 32-35), since he knows no cause to fear the most searching investigation. Zophar devoutly hopes that this yearning may be gratified, that God *may* speak with Job and disclose the secrets his wisdom has discovered; since the wisdom of God, or his "counsel"—the outcome of his wisdom—lies "fold over fold:" it is not simple and clear to the human eye, but intricate and involved: in every depth there is a deeper still. Were God to speak and disclose the secrets of his profound and penetrating wisdom, Job, so far from being justified, would be amazed and confounded; he would discover that God, whom he had accused of heaping undeserved calamities on his head, had not inflicted a tithe of the calamities he had provoked; he would find in himself

undivulged crimes
Unwhipped of justice;

and would have gratefully to acknowledge that God was far indeed from having "remembered," from having called him to account for, "all his guilt."

This is Zophar's only original contribution to the Controversy—this unfounded and insolent assertion that Job's complaint of a punishment out of all proportion to his offence was true only in the adverse sense, that his offence was far greater than his punishment.

In *Verses* 7-11 he proceeds to eulogize, with some touch of the base courtier spirit and motive—as Job points out in Chapter xiii. verses 7-9—the Wisdom which lies fold over fold, the all-penetrating all-pervading omniscience of God. It is too high and deep, too long and broad, in one word, too "perfect," for man to comprehend. And if He, whose motives

no man can sound, and whose deeds, therefore, no man should censure, *should* enter into a controversy with men; if (comp. Chap. ix. 11, 12), prompted by his knowledge of their secret sins, He should cross their path, arrest and imprison them, and call them to judgment, who will be able to resist the wisdom and the force with which He will plead against them? Job had used almost the very same words, and drawn from them the same conclusion,—the same, and yet how different! For Job had argued that it was impossible for man, however innocent, to withstand God, because He was so strong that his mere fiat would seem to make wrong right and right wrong. No, replies Zophar, it is not before mere Force, it is not before a capricious Omnipotence, that you will fall; but before a divine all-searching Wisdom that detects sins in men of which even they themselves are not aware, but which He discovers at the first glance, without needing to search for them, without seeming so much as to look that way.

Verse 12 is, perhaps, the most difficult, though it is by no means the most important, we have yet encountered, and has almost as many interpretations as Commentators. The general drift of it is plain, however, at least so far as this—that Zophar intends to contrast the folly of man with the wisdom of God, and that by “the vain man void of understanding,” and “the wild ass’s colt,” he means Job, who had assumed to pit his wisdom against God’s. But here all agreement ends, and out of many interpretations we must fix on one. Out of a great multitude we select two as most deserving of attention. The first, which is by far the finest, reads the Verse thus—and the Hebrew is as patient of the reading as of any other:

And hollow man is hearted,
And the wild ass’s colt is quickened into man.

Read thus, the sense is that, by the discipline of the Divine Providence, the judgments inflicted on sin, which Zophar had just been vindicating, man, who is by nature “hollow,” “empty,” “vain,” has, as it were, a heart put into his hollowness, acquires, as we should say, a new heart, and becomes a new creature. Stubborn, unschooled, untameable as the wild ass of the desert, he is humanized; a change, a trans-

formation, passes on him, such as we might suppose would pass on a rough wild young colt if a human spirit were breathed into it. In short, the Verse is an illustration of the words wrung from Hezekiah by many sorrows; "By these things men live, and in all these is the life of the spirit." It is a noble thought finely illustrated. But is it quite appropriate on the lips of Zophar? Is it not too deep and subtle for so blunt and irascible a man? On Elihu's lips it would be quite at home; but it is so alien to the spirit of Zophar as to compel us to fall back on a reading which looks very tame and poor after that we have just considered. I understand him to mean, then, no more than this: that, when viewed in the light of the Divine Wisdom, Job or any other man, however highly he may think of himself, is a vain and empty creature void of understanding, as unschooled and undisciplined from his very birth as the colt of the wild ass.

After thus stigmatizing and rebuking the foremost man of all his time, Zophar (*Verses 13, 14*) appears to know some little relenting. He has just virtually described Job as a witless empty-pate, hollow, without a heart, a stubborn intractable colt; but he now admits that Job has at least the power of erecting himself above himself, that there is some distinction, or possibility of distinction, between him and the vain man void of understanding. If *thou*, he says, unlike the stubborn and witless dolt, wilt turn thine heart toward God, and stretch out thine hands to Him; *i.e.*, if thou wilt turn the whole current of thy thought, passion, and activity toward Him away from whom it now runs, there may still be hope for thee. But his relenting mood is only less crude and harsh than his angry mood. For not only does he assume that in heart and deed Job has turned against God, and needs to reverse his attitude; he also assumes that his hands are stained with a crime from which they must be cleansed, that some secret but enormous wickedness dwells in his tent which must be thrust out, and that his face is darkened by an ignominy for which an atonement must be made.

Verses 15-19. Still he is sure that if Job will cleanse himself, he will not, as he had feared (*Chap. ix. 29-31*), cleanse himself in vain. God has framed no such irrevocable deter-

mination to hold him guilty as he suspects. Let him but lift a pure face to the pure heavens, and he shall stand "firm,"—literally, "thou shalt be *molten*," *i.e.* become like a molten statue, firm, solid, steadfast, standing squarely and immovably on its base. He shall no longer be haunted by the memory of his miseries, nor sit brooding over them till he fears that they may be renewed. He shall forget them; they will pass from his memory like waters that have run by and left no trace behind them. His life shall disengage itself from the darkness with which it is now entangled and obscured, and enter on days brighter than very noon. So far from sinking, as he thought to do (Chap. x. 21, 22), into that dim region in which "the light is darkness," he shall rise into a region so high and clear that its very darkness will be as dawn. So far from cherishing despair and living in perpetual terror and alarm, he shall be sustained by the courage of hope, and delight himself in a security in which no possibility of danger can be discerned. So far from sitting solitary and forsaken, many shall come and pay court to him; he shall have all that should accompany a tranquil old age, with "the bounty and the benison of Heaven to boot." All these succours and blessings, however, depend on his instant and hearty penitence. If he remain impenitent, his will still incorrect to Heaven, he will meet the doom of the impenitent; his eyes will pine away with unsatisfied desire; every refuge of lies in which he has taken shelter will crumble into ruin; and his last hope will be fleeting, unsubstantial, irrevocable as the last breath of a dying man.

6. JOB TO ZOPHAR.

CHAPTERS XII.-XIV.

Each of the three Friends has now spoken, and the First Colloquy, the Conference of the First Day perhaps, draws to a close. In the harangue which closes it, Job does not simply answer the last speaker, who indeed has added little to the

argument of his predecessors ; but rather sets himself to reply on the whole discussion, so far as it had yet gone. He *does* reply to Zophar—rebuking the insolence of his tone, yet admitting the unsearchableness of the Divine Wisdom on which Zophar had laid so much stress, nay, affirming that it was far more inexplicable than even Zophar conceived it to be ; and challenging that very encounter with God, that open encounter with his almighty Antagonist in public court, with which Zophar had sought to appal and silence him : but the whole course of the Controversy is present to his mind. Eliphaz and Bildad, opponents more worthy of his steel than Zophar with his little quiver of truisms, had sought to force him to the same conclusions ; they too had argued for the unimpeachable justice, the irresistible majesty, and the unfathomable wisdom of God, and affirmed that the true attitude of those whom He afflicts is to humble themselves under his mighty hand, and penitently confess the sins which had provoked Him to chasten them,—Eliphaz citing oracles and visions, Bildad the wisdom of antiquity, in support of their common argument : and now Job takes all their points at once on his single target, assails them with their own weapons, confutes them out of their own lips. He shews them that he himself is even more deeply sensible of the power of God than they are—for has he not felt it ? and of the unsearchableness of his wisdom—for has he not failed to fathom it ? Twice over, therefore, he flatly denies that they have overthrown him by their shallow reasonings (Chap. xii. 3, and Chap. xiii. 2) ; and follows up his second denial by asserting that, while they have been striving to give him a fall, they have prepared a terrible overthrow for themselves. They had sided with God simply because he was strong ; but God was far too great to relish a flattery as gross and palpable as that offered to an Oriental monarch by his “knee-crooking knaves” and “obsequious parasites :” nay, He would resent and punish it. They had shewn themselves to be the mere sycophants of Heaven, because they dreaded the Power that ruled in heaven : but they had thus, however unwittingly, arrayed that Power *against* them. Because they had “spoken wrongfully for God,” as though He needed to have “falsehood uttered on his

behalf," God Himself would heavily rebuke them (Chap. xiii. 7-11) when He appeared to close and crown the argument.

Having thus routed the Friends and driven them from the field, Job turns once more to God. So far from fearing the theophany with which he had been threatened, there is nothing that he so deeply craves. He has not much hope of an acquittal indeed; but, acquitted or condemned, he longs to put his fortune to the touch, and win or lose it all. If he may only defend his ways to the very face of God, with a brain no longer confused and darkened by agony, and a heart unterrified by the mere majesty of his Antagonist, he will embrace his sentence, whatever it may be (Chap. xiii. 14-22).

So set is he on thus appearing before God, even though God should be both Accuser and Judge, that he prepares his "*Declaration*," his solemn and ordered defence, reciting the several pleas he intends to urge, and surrounding himself in imagination with the paraphernalia and accessories of a Court of Justice. This Declaration (Chap. xiii. 23-28) is one of the most noble and pathetic documents in the literature of the world; even custom cannot stale its infinite impressiveness, but rather renders it more impressive by associating it with the most solemn and tender moments in our own brief span.

Viewing this passage as a whole, three points call for special remark.

(1) As Job shakes himself loose from the arguments of the Friends—and that in the only noble way, viz., by confuting them with arguments which go far more deeply than theirs into the common and verified facts of human experience—his conception of the character of God rises and clears. No longer irritated by their dogmatic perversions of the facts of life he, who had so passionately impugned the justice of God, now feels and admits Him to be so just that He will punish injustice even when it is exercised on his own behalf, so just that, whatever appearances may say, He will not suffer any upright man to perish unavenged (Chap. xiii. 7-16).

(2) As in his answer to Bildad, his sense of the inequalities of human life, the mystery of God's dealings with men, awoke in Job's heart a yearning for and a dim presentiment of a Mediator, an incarnation of God, who should both speak for

men to the Majesty on high and interpret Him to men, so here, as his prophetic soul broods over the brevity and the misery of human life upon the earth, there rises in it a yearning for and a presentiment of a life beyond the grave, in which all wrongs shall be righted, all privations compensated, all sorrows comforted, all problems solved (Chap. xiv. 5–15).

(3) While his mind is occupied with these large and solemn conceptions, while he muses with a generous grief over the miseries which afflict the whole race, the bitter sense of his personal misery, which elsewhere breaks out into the most passionate utterance, is held in abeyance. Throughout these Chapters he hardly alludes to it, and never does more than allude to it.

Where the greater malady is fix'd
The lesser is scarce felt.

The agony and the shame of his loathsome disease, the scorn and contempt of the tribes, the shrill mockery of the little children (Chap. xix. 18) as they played about the *mezbele*, and even the suspicions and abhorrence of his most inward friends, are all forgotten for the time; his whole soul is absorbed in the great tragedy of human life, in the endeavour to master its secret and law, an endeavour which he feels to be hopeless, but from which he nevertheless cannot desist. This inner conflict dulls him to all interests and vicissitudes but its own;

The tempest in his mind
Doth from his senses take all feeling else
Save what beats there.

CHAPTERS XII.–XIV.

CHAPTER XII. 1.—*Then answered Job and said :*

2. *No doubt but ye are the people,
 And with you shall wisdom die !*
3. *But I have understanding as well as ye ;
 I fall not beneath you :
 And who knoweth not such things as these ?*
4. *I am become as one who is a laughing-stock to his friends :
 He who called on God and He answered him—*

- 'The just, the innocent—a laughing-stock !*
5. *Contempt for mishap is the impulse of the secure ;*
It awaiteth those whose feet totter.
6. *Tranquil are the tents of the spoilers,*
And they who provoke God are confident,
Who carry their god in their hand.
7. *But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee,*
And the fowl of the air, and they shall tell thee ;
8. *Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee,*
And the fish of the sea shall declare it unto thee :
9. *Who knoweth not by all these*
That Jehovah's hand hath wrought this,
10. *In whose hand is the life of every living creature*
And the breath of all mankind ?
11. *Shall not the ear test words*
As the palate testeth food ?
12. *Is wisdom with the aged,*
And understanding with length of days ?
13. *With Him are wisdom and strength,*
Counsel and understanding are his.
14. *Lo, He breaketh down, and there is no rebuilding,*
He shutteth up a man, and none can release him :
15. *When He withholdeth the waters, they dry up ;*
When He sendeth them forth, they lay waste the earth.
16. *With Him are strength and wisdom ;*
The misled and the misleader both are his :
17. *He leadeth away councillors captive,*
And maketh judges fools ;
18. *He looseneth the girdle of kings,*
And bindeth their loins with a cord ;
19. *He leadeth away priests captive,*
And overthroweth the strong ;
20. *He depriveth the trusty of eloquence,*
And taketh away judgment from the elders ;
21. *He poureth contempt on nobles,*
And unlooseth the belt of the mighty ;
22. *He revealeth deep things out of darkness,*
And bringeth the blackness of death to light ;
23. *He exalteth nations, and destroyeth them ;*
He enlargeth nations, then straiteneth them :
24. *He taketh away the heart of the chieftains,*
And maketh them wander in a pathless waste,

25. *So that they grope in a darkness where there is no light :
Yea, He maketh them to reel like a drunkard.*

- CHAPTER XIII. 1. *Lo, all this mine eye hath seen,
Mine ear hath heard and noted it ;*
2. *What ye know I know also :
I fall not beneath you.*
3. *But I would address myself to the Almighty,
I crave to reason with God ;*
4. *For ye patch up old saws :
Worthless bunglers are ye all.*
5. *O that ye would altogether hold your peace !
It should be counted to you for wisdom.*
6. *Hear, now, my defence,
And listen to the pleadings of my lips.*
7. *Will ye speak wrongfully for God,
And utter falsehood on his behalf ?*
8. *Will ye accept his person,
And thus contend for God ?*
9. *Will it be good for you when He searcheth you out ?
Can ye deceive Him as man is deceived ?*
10. *Heavily will He rebuke you
If ye privily accept persons !*
11. *Should not his majesty make you afraid
And the dread of Him fall on you ?*
12. *Your maxims are maxims of ashes,
Your strongholds strongholds of clay.*
13. *Be silent before me, that I may speak,
And let what will befall me.*
14. *Come what may, I will take my flesh in my teeth,
And will put my life in my hand.*
15. *Lo, He may slay me,—I have ceased to hope ;
Still let me defend my ways to his face.*
16. *Even this speaketh for my acquittal,
For a sinner would not dare to come before Him.*
17. *Give good heed to my discourse,
And let my Declaration sink into your ears.*
18. *Behold, now, I have set my cause in order :
I know that I have right on my side.*
19. *Who is he that can allege aught against me ?
Then would I be silent and give up the ghost.*
20. *Only do not Thou two things unto me,
And I will not hide myself from thy Presence,—*

21. *Withdraw thine hand from me,
And let not thy majesty affright me ;*
22. *Then do Thou accuse, and I will answer,
Or let me speak, and do Thou respond.*
23. *How many are my iniquities and my sins ?
Shew me my sin and my transgression !*
24. *Wherefore hidest Thou thy face,
And holdest me for thy foe ?*
25. *Wilt Thou terrify a driven leaf,
And chase the withered stubble ?*
26. *For Thou recordest bitter things against me,
And makest me to inherit the sins of my youth ;*
27. *Thou also settest my feet in the stocks,
And watchest all my ways :*
28. *Thou hast drawn a line, beyond which I cannot pass,
Round one who is consumed as with a rot,
Like a garment gnawed by the moth.*

CHAPTER XIV. 1.

- Man, born of woman,
Of few days and full of trouble,*
2. *Cometh forth like a flower and is cut down ;
He fleeth like a shadow and continueth not :*
3. *And dost Thou fix thine eyes on such an one ?
And wilt Thou bring me into judgment with Thee ?*
4. *O that the clean could come forth from the unclean !
But not one can.*
5. *If his days are determined,
If the number of his months is with Thee,
If Thou hast set bounds that he cannot pass,*
6. *Turn from him that he may rest
Till, like the hireling, he accomplish his day.*
7. *For the tree hath hope
That, if felled, it will sprout again,
And that the sucker thereof will not fail ;*
8. *Though its root wax old in the earth,
And the stock thereof moulder in the ground,*
9. *Yet will it bud at the scent of water,
And shoot forth boughs like a young plant :*
10. *But man dieth and is brought low,
Man giveth up the ghost,—and where is he ?*
11. *The waters fail from the pool,
And the stream drieth and is parched up ;*

12. *So man lieth down and riseth not :
Till the heavens be no more, he shall not awake
Nor be aroused from his sleep.*
13. *O that Thou wouldest hide me in Hades,
That Thou wouldest conceal me till thy wrath be past,
That Thou wouldest appoint me a set time and remember me !*
14. *(If a man die, shall he live again ?)
All the days of that hard term would I wait
Till my discharge came :*
15. *Thou wouldest call, and I would answer Thee ;
Thou wouldest yearn toward the work of thine hands.*
16. *But now Thou numberest my steps :
Dost Thou not watch for my sin ?*
17. *My transgression is sealed up in a bag,
And Thou sewest up mine iniquity.*
18. *Verily, a mountain, when it falleth, crumbleth away,
And a rock, growing old, decayeth from its place ;*
19. *Waters wear down stones,
And floods wash away the soil of the earth :
So Thou destroyest the hope of man ;*
20. *Thou prevailest over him evermore, and he passeth hence ;
Thou changest his aspect and sendest him away :*
21. *His sons come to honour, but he knoweth it not,
Or they are brought low, but he heedeth it not ;*
22. *Only in his own flesh can he suffer pain,
And his spirit mourn for itself.*

Job opens his Reply, as his manner is, in a tone of bitter irony, an irony, however, which is here in place. The contemptuous and cruel severity of Zophar cried aloud for castigation. But Job does not address himself to Zophar simply. No doubt Eliphaz and Bildad had intimated by their bearing and manner their general sympathy and concurrence in his censures, although they themselves might have worded them more considerately.

Traduced by ignorant tongues, which neither know
His faculties nor person, yet will be
The chronicles of his doing,

Job is deeply wounded, and now turns upon them with an irony so fierce as to seem out of keeping with his character, till we remember that nothing is so fierce as wounded and in-

sulted love. "Doubtless," he cries (*Chapter xii. Verse 2*), "ye are the people," the true representatives of mankind, alone worthy of the name, "and with you shall wisdom die!" Then (*Verse 3*), fixing on a phrase used by Zophar (*Chap. xi. 12*), in which he had implied that Job was a man 'without a heart' and "void of understanding," he retorts, "But *I have an understanding*"—literally, "a heart"—"as well as ye;" and in this conflict of mind with mind, this clashing of opinion with opinion, "I do not fall beneath you," like a weaker or less skilful wrestler beneath his antagonist—a phrase, or figure, so much to his mind that he repeats it in *Chapter xiii. Verse 2*. Weak and unskilled indeed must he be who should find himself overmatched by you; for "who knoweth not such things as these?" *i. e.* the well-worn truisms and platitudes which Zophar had just been drumming into his reluctant ears. In *Verse 4* he lets out the secret of his bitterness. What angered him past all endurance was that it should be his *friends* who made a laughing-stock of him; and, still more, that they should dare to make a just and innocent man, one who had been in the closest correspondence with Heaven and had shewn himself to be not unworthy of that grace, the butt of their derision.

Verse 5 contains a fine instance of Job's reasonableness, of that "large-mindedness" which the Hebrews ranked among the chief virtues. Even when he is resenting a personal wrong, even when he is in his most ironic and indignant mood, he is calm enough to meditate, to generalize, and even to admit that the Friends are but betraying a weakness common to all men in their position. He confesses that his is no isolated case, that even his sorest trial is the common lot of the unfortunate and the miserable. Contempt for the weak, who totter and fall on slippery paths, is the habitual impulse of those who stand firmly on the firm ground of security, and who see no reason why other men should not be as vigorous and resolute and prosperous as themselves. Umbreit and Rosenmüller contend for a very graphic rendering of this Verse. They read it thus:

*The torch, prepared for faltering feet,
Is despised by the secure;*

and take it to suggest that just as the traveller, when once he has gained the shelter and security of the caravanserai, flings away the torch of whose guidance he was glad enough while he groped his way through the darkness with faltering and uncertain feet, so the Friends of Job, now that they can no longer make use of him, set no further store by him, but fling him aside with contempt. The rendering is so picturesque that we resign it with reluctance ; but I am afraid it must be resigned, since the weight of authority is conclusively against it : and that we must be content to understand Job as simply affirming that the strong and secure are apt to despise the weak and timid, and as finding in this common impulse the secret of Zophar's insolence. Had Zophar been less content with himself and his lot, had he known what it was to grope his way blindly through an inexplicable misery, he would not have been so harsh and contemptuous in his censures and rebukes. It must have been a noble nature which, in the midst of its agony, could frame such an apology for one who had given its agony a keener edge.

From *Verse 6* onwards Job passes into a new train of thought, and addresses himself rather to Bildad and Eliphaz than to Zophar. While he still challenges the conclusion they held in common, while he continues to deny what they all affirm, viz., that piety and prosperity, sin and misery, are correlatives, he also shews that he himself had a far deeper and larger conception of the irresistible power of God than that which the two earlier speakers in the Colloquy had so impressively enunciated. He does not for a moment question that his own losses and griefs proceed from the hand of God ; nor does he for a moment deny that

all the plagues that in the pendulous air
Hang fated o'er men's faults

descend and strike them by the ordinance of God. On the contrary, he affirms this precious truth of theirs, which they press upon him as though it were a novel and profound discovery, to be so mere and patent a truism that the veriest dolt cannot have missed it ; the whole creation is instinct with it ; all animate creatures, and even the inanimate earth, constantly

publish it abroad. Do they imagine that *he* is ignorant of it? He will shew them that to him it is more familiar than it is to them, that he can handle it "more masterly," and develop it to issues of which they have not dreamed.

He starts on this new train of thought by once more challenging the sufficiency of their formula. The whole scheme and mystery of Providence, he says (*Verse 6*), is *not* to be compressed into their petty maxim, that good comes to the good and evil to the evil. There are large and common facts of daily experience which lie outside of it, and contradict it; as, for example, these. The tents of the violent and rapacious are tranquil, and often stand in an air of as sunny and deep repose as the homes of the just. Men may be at peace, and bask in the very summer of prosperity, although they both wrong their neighbour and provoke God, nay, although they worship no god but their sword. The last line of the Verse has provoked much comment, but its significance is quite plain, I think. The men "who carry their god (their *Eloah*) in their hands" are men who worship the sword with which they win their spoils, who regard it as the supreme power of the world, who have no god but *that*.¹ The phrase is probably an antique proverb which reappears in various forms, and possibly its earliest form is given in the Hebrew of Genesis xxxi. 29, where Laban says, "There is *god* to my hand," meaning, "There is *power* in my hand to harm thee, if only I cared to use it."

Here, then, were facts inconsistent with, unprovided for, in the inadequate formula of the Friends: on the one hand, the just and blameless man, who walked with God, might nevertheless walk with faltering feet till he became the "laughing-stock" of the strong and secure; and, on the other hand, the violent and rapacious, who revered nothing but the sword, might nevertheless dwell in an unbroken tranquillity. Did Job, then, deny the overruling power of God, and conclude that He was unable to prosper the righteous and to punish the wicked? So far from questioning that power, he entertained a far profounder conviction of it than those who were for ever

¹ Compare with this Verse, Habakkuk i. 11, "Then *its strength becometh its god*;" and Virgil's *Æneid*, x. 773, "*Deatra mihi Deus*."

exhorting him to defer to it. He traced to it not only the common order of Providence, but also these extraordinary and perplexing exceptions to that order. The misery of the good was God's doing no less than their happiness, and the prosperity of the wicked no less than the penal consequences of their sins. It was *because* he traced all events to the hand of God that his mind was fretting itself against an insoluble problem, and his heart was haunted by a sorrow not to be assuaged. It took no great wisdom to discover the constant presence and interference of God; the wonder was that any man could shut his eyes and ears to the proofs of it: for (*Verses 7 and 8*) the earth and the sea, with all that dwelt therein, were for ever proclaiming themselves to be his handiwork. Lives there a man (*Verses 9 and 10*) so inobservant and inapt as not to have inferred from the things which are seen and made the invisible yet irresistible power of the Creator and Lord of the universe? as not to have learned in whose hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind?

It is a singular and noteworthy fact, and we must turn aside for a moment from the main argument to consider it, that only in *Verse 9* does the Poet bring the Divine Name *Jehovah* into his verse. It occurs profusely in his prose, both in the Prologue and in the Epilogue, but only on this occasion throughout the Poem proper. In *this* his names for God are *El*, *Eloah*, *Elohim*, *Shaddai*. Many explanations of the curious literary fact that this sacred Name occurs here, though nowhere else in the Poem, have been offered. Schlottmann says, "We find a sufficient explanation of it in the solemn earnestness with which Job desires to shew that he is as deeply, nay, more deeply, penetrated than the Friends by the manifestation of the glory of God in nature." Canon Cook says, "It is as though reflection on the greatness of God brought out the very innermost conviction of the Patriarch's heart, and forced from him the word which expresses the very essence of the Deity;" and suggests that "there may also be a reference to his own words when he was told of his children's death (*Chap. i. 21*), '*Jehovah* gave, and *Jehovah* hath taken

away.” But Delitzsch’s suggestion seems to me to come nearest to the mark. “That the name of God, *Jehovah*, for once escapes the Poet here, is to be explained by the fact that the phrase, ‘The hand of *Jehovah* hath made this,’ was a somewhat proverbial expression.” (Comp. Isaiah xli. 20 and lxvi. 2.)

To convince Job of the power of God, and that this power was used for the punishment of the wicked, Bildad had arrayed against him the wisdom of the antique world (Chap. viii. 8–19). And Job (in *Verse* 11), with a sagacity which those who pin their faith to the sleeve of Tradition and with whom mere antiquity is a conclusive argument of truth would do well to imitate, now reminds him that the sayings of the ancients are not to be accepted indiscriminately, that they must be tested and estimated at their true worth. Just as the palate is given to man that it may select only those kinds of food which are wholesome and nourishing, so the ear is given to him, and, of course, the judgment which sits behind the ear, that he may try the sayings of men and select from them only those which nourish and invigorate the soul. A valuable, and even invaluable principle this; and, in *Verses* 12 and 13, he lays down another of at least equal worth. No doubt antiquity was wise, no doubt experienced age is wise, and should command a certain respect; but *God* has an absolute and inherent wisdom, not simply the wisdom which results from experience and is hallowed by age. Wisdom and understanding dwell with Him as in their native home; and therefore if we can gain access to his counsels, they should command an instant and profound deference infinitely beyond that we pay to men, however ancient and widely-experienced they may be. Tradition is good, if it help us to interpret the words of God; but the words of God are infinitely more precious and authoritative than any tradition. These are principles which lie at the very root of all intelligent Protestantism, of all liberal and progressive thought indeed; and it is a welcome surprise to find them so clearly enunciated in one of the oldest writings in the world.

Whether or not Job meant to claim a certain inspiration

for the Verses that follow, whether or not he meant to imply that they contain a ray of the Divine and Eternal Wisdom, it is quite certain that they express a conception of Providence which has always and widely obtained in the East. Bildad had used his power of discrimination, and had selected certain antique proverbs which served his turn and relished on his "palate." And now Job will make *his* selection. As he reads it, the profound ancestral wisdom depicts God as ruling men with a mysterious sovereignty which, instead of meting out to every man the due reward of his deeds, is wholly independent of human desert. And, curiously enough, the conception which Job now advances is quite as characteristic of Oriental thought as that which Bildad had advanced. Side by side with each other there have always stood these speculative opposites, which are often found unreconciled in one and the same Creed: (1) that man's deserts are the sole measure of his reward; and (2) that man's life and lot are dominated by an inscrutable fate, a Divine doom, or decree, which he is utterly unable either to modify or resist. Bildad had argued for the first of these conceptions, and Job now proceeds to give a fine rhetorical expansion to the latter of them. His conception is virtually that of the Mohammedan creed, which is summed up in the brief strong words, "*If* God will, and *how* God will."

The Verses in which he expands it call for little remark; for the most part their meaning lies on the very surface. In Verses 14-16 Job affirms that the inscrutable power, the sovereign decree, of God shapes all sequences and events, both in the natural and in the human worlds; in Verses 17-21, he traces its effects in the history of individual men, and in Verses 22-25 its effects on tribal or national communities.

Verse 16.—"The misled and the misleader both are his" has an exact parallel in the Coran (*Sur. xiv. 5*), "God both leads into error, and guides (*i.e.*, guides aright) whom He will."

The image of *Verse 18* is very expressive. God replaces the costly jewelled state-girdle of kings with the "cord" of servitude.

Verse 19.—The allusion to "priests"—which seems to bring the Poem down to a later than the patriarchal age—

does not necessarily imply the existence of a separate sacerdotal caste. Job may simply refer to the fact that, in the patriarchal times, the head of the family, or the chief of the clan, was its recognized priest and mediator with God. Melchizedek was a priest of the Most High. Abraham offered sacrifices, and made intercession. In the second clause of the Verse the word rendered "the strong" means, literally, "the *everflowing*," i.e., those whose prosperity runs in full tide, who seem above the reach of change, whose career knows no check.

Verse 20.—The line, "He depriveth the trusty of eloquence," might be more literally rendered, "He taketh away *the lip* of the trusty." The allusion seems to be to men who had been tried and found of good counsel, to practised orators and experienced advisers who had come to be relied on by the monarchs whom they served, or who perhaps had come to trust in themselves: such men, for example, as Daniel and Ahithophel afterwards shewed themselves to be.

In *Verses 22–25* there is throughout, probably, an undercurrent of reference to the description of the effects of God's interference in human affairs given by Eliphaz (Chap. v. 11–16). Many of his words and phrases are repeated; his premisses are accepted and illustrated afresh: it is only his conclusion which Job disputes. He had so pointed his description as to make it sustain his thesis, that calamity is invariably the result of transgression, and that the sole method of rising out of it is by repentance and amendment; but Job so points his description as to educe from it the moral, that the lot of men and nations is shaped not so much by a just retributive Providence as by a capricious and inscrutable Fate.

"The deep things out of darkness" of *Verse 22* are, possibly, the secret intrigues of statesmen, their occult and evil intentions; or, more probably, the hidden bents and currents which slowly give shape to the character and functions of a nation or ever it is aware, or ever even its rulers are aware, of them—that stream of tendency, running darkly underground for a while, which silently carries us we know not whither, we know not how, and lands us in enterprises and modes of national activity alien and opposed to those toward which our subtlest politicians supposed they were guiding us.

And yet even of this dark inscrutable Fate, which leads men and nations "whither they would not," Job has no fear; for this is only one of many faces which God wears, only one of many aspects which his Providence assumes. We must not assume either that Job denied the view of God's rule held by the Friends, or that he asserts the view to which he himself has just given expression to be the only or a complete view. He admits that the Divine Providence is retributive; all he denies is that Retribution is an adequate key to *all* the phenomena it presents. He affirms that there is a non-retributive element in it; that this non-retributive element is as patent in it as the retributive; and that the two combined present a profound mystery which no hypothesis that either he or the Friends can frame will dissolve and explain. And, therefore, He would fain reason with God Himself, and ask *Him* to explain and vindicate his way with men. The Friends have *threatened* him with a theophany. There is nothing he so much desires, however awful it may be to flesh and blood; for in the depths of his heart he is sure that God is just and rules in equity. With humility and faith, with a pathetic blending of courage and fear, he solicits, nay, demands, access to God, that he may defend his ways to his face. But as yet he cannot wholly shake himself loose from the Friends; he is in no fit mood to plead with God; his indignation against their cruelty and servility—cruelty to himself, servility to the Almighty—must have time to work itself off; and so in the first twenty-two Verses of *Chapter* xiii. we have the strangest succession and conflict of moods, the desire to reason with God being perpetually broken and confused by flashes of caustic irony against the men who had both belied God and insulted *him*.

His oscillation between these two impulses, the impulse to appeal to God who alone can comprehend and clear him, and the impulse to bestow on his Friends the castigation they so richly deserved, is so marked in these Verses, and the terms in which it is expressed are so free from perplexing allusions, that a few brief comments on them will suffice. The two main points to be borne in mind, as we turn to a study of this great and noble heart in a moment of supreme agitation and

excitement, are those I have already mentioned : viz., that in dealing with the Friends, Job charges them with having sided with God against him rather from a wish to stand well with the omnipotent Ruler of the world than from a sincere conviction that he, Job, was in the wrong ; and that he has still so firm a persuasion of the ultimate justice of God as to be sure that this sycophantic deference to mere Power will be offensive to Him, and must provoke his wrath rather than propitiate his favour.

In *Verse 3* he states his craving to reason with God, since the Friends have no reason worthy of the name to allege on his behalf.

In *Verses 4-12* he is diverted from at once yielding to this craving by a righteous indignation against the men who had so cruelly misjudged him, and reduces them to the dilemma :

Either you must
Confess yourselves wondrous malicious,
Or be accused of folly.

The best commentary on *Verse 5* is that of Proverbs xvii. 28 : “ Even a fool, *when he holdeth his peace*, is counted wise.” In *Verses 7* and *8* he charges them with being mere flatterers of the Divine Power. In *Verses 9-11* he warns them that by such a base sycophancy they will but injure themselves with the very Being they hope to propitiate. A very noble conception ! A man must have been very sure that God was just before he could have risen to it. There is a wonderful and impressive boldness, the boldness of both genius and faith, in the thought that, in any trial of right in which even God Himself is implicated, justice is to be the first and sole consideration. His person is not to be accepted ; no deference is to be accorded to his rank and power. Those who give sentence are not to be influenced by the knowledge of how much He can do for, or against, them. He Himself will be the very first to resent it if they do. Any departure from strict equity is hateful to Him, and all the more hateful if it be in his own favour. We have heard Job say many hard things of God, frame many partial and imperfect conceptions of

Him. Let us the more carefully remember this great saying of his—surely one of the greatest and noblest ever uttered by man.

Verse 12.—They had threatened him with a terrible doom if, or when, the Judge of all the earth should appear. Let them bethink them of the doom which they themselves have provoked. In that day the oracular and proverbial strongholds,¹ the maxims of antiquity and the truisms of the passing day, behind which they have entrenched themselves, will vanish like smoke, and moulder like clay, leaving them defenceless and exposed.

In *Verses 13 and 14* Job falls back on his resolve to appeal to God. But he knows how terrible will be the risk of this great enterprise. "I will take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in my hand!" he cries,—a fine proverbial expression for running all hazards even to the last, of which Shakespeare gives a noble variation in King Henry VIII., when describing the people of England under oppressions which break the sides of loyalty, as

Compell'd by hunger
And lack of other means, *in desperate manner*
Daring the event to the teeth.

Of *Verse 15* we have so fine a rendering in our Authorized Version that we cannot surrender it without pain. And, indeed, many competent scholars refuse to surrender it. They still read the verse, "Though he slay me, I will trust in him;" or

Lo, He may slay me, yet will I wait for Him;
And I will defend my ways to His face;

i.e., I will look hopefully for a verdict. This sense, however, rests on a bad text of the Original, and *must*, I fear, be given up. The Hebrew of the best Codices compels us to take the Verse as meaning: "Lo, He may slay me; I have little hope

¹ There is a play on words in the Hebrew of this Verse which can only be imperfectly transferred to the English. The German lends itself more easily to it. Thus Schlottmann renders it:

Eure Denksprüche sind Aschensprüche,
Lehmburgen eure Burgen!

of any other issue to my appeal: nevertheless, so conscious am I of the justice of my cause, I can no other than defend my ways to his face." And if we lose something by this rendering, we also gain something. If we lose a noble expression of an invincible faith in God, a faith stronger than death, we gain a noble expression of loyalty to truth at all hazards, of that superb and courageous honesty which is true to itself in scorn of consequence. And *this*, too, is the gift of God, and springs, in the last resort, from an invincible confidence in his righteousness and truth.

Job himself (*Verse 16*) finds his sole hope in this incorrigible and losing honesty. It is the one voice which speaks in his heart, and even this voice speaks somewhat faintly and dubiously, "for his acquittal." A sinner, he argues, a man laden with unredressed and unrepented crimes, would be incapable of it. *He* would not long to stand face to face with God, and dare all that he might reason and plead with Him. The fact that *I* cherish this longing, and will cheerfully fling away my life to gratify it, is surely a good omen, a ground for hope.

Verse 17.—In the strength of this hope he sets himself to compose his "Declaration," to draw up the Brief from which he intends to plead his cause when he is admitted to the presence of the Judge. And this Declaration (*Verse 18*) is to contain no cunningly devised pleas by which he may make the worse appear the better cause. His aim is not to escape punishment, but to establish his integrity. To snatch a verdict by legal chicanery will not content him. He will be content with nothing short of hearing God and man declare that he has right on his side. If indeed (*Verse 19*) he could believe either God or man able to prove him guilty, to shew that his calamities were the due reward of his transgressions, there would be nothing for him but to die in mute despair. But he is confident that no fair argument, no impartial trial, will issue in his condemnation. Only (*Verses 20 and 21*) as the enterprise is so momentous and perilous, as the issue of it, for him, must be life or death, he trusts that the trial will be a fair one, and that he may be permitted, enabled even, to make his defence as vigorous and conclusive as it ought to

be. But how can he hope to do that in his present condition? A sick man cannot exert the full tale of his energies even in self-vindication; a terrified man can neither collect nor express his thoughts with force and precision. And, therefore, he stipulates for health,—“Withdraw thine hand from me;” and for a self-possession undisturbed by fear, “And let not thy majesty affright me.” These conditions granted, he is ready to undertake his defence even against a Divine Advocate, and is indifferent what form the trial may assume. In the forensic terms of his age (*Verse 22*) he challenges the Almighty to appear either as accuser or defendant, and professes an equal willingness either to answer any charges which God may bring against him, or himself to allege the counts to which he would have God reply.

And so, here he stands, trembling on the threshold of the Supreme Court, fully alive to the tremendous risk he is about to run, but sustained by the sense of his own integrity and by a secret assurance that God will do him justice even though He should have to give a verdict against Himself.

At last Job has nerved himself to contend with the Almighty! He has challenged God, “in desperate manner daring the event to the teeth,” either to accuse him and listen to his defence, or to reply to his impeachment of the Divine justice and compassion. He has prepared his pleas, drawn out his Declaration, or Defence; and he now enters the presence of the Judge of all the earth, trembling and afraid because his integrity to Heaven is all he dare call his own, and yet strong in the assurance that nothing but integrity could possibly avail him. He has but little hope of a happy issue to the trial, since he believes that, for some inscrutable reason, God has determined to hold him for a foe; but he is resolved, eager, to put his fate to the touch, to learn whether or not he has rightly divined the purpose of his Adversary and Judge. His feeling is:

If my offence be of such mortal kind
That nor my service past, nor present sorrows,
Nor purposed merit in futurity,
Can ransom me into his love again,
But to know so must be my benefit.

He enters the presence, then, and waits to hear what God has to allege against him. But there is no voice to accuse, nor, indeed, any to answer him. As God sits silent in this "session of the soul," and brings no charge against him, Job himself (*Verse 23*) breaks the silence with the demand, "How many are my iniquities and my sins? Shew me my sin and my transgression!" That is, he demands, generally, what and how many are the charges he will have to meet; and, in particular, what is that special and heinous offence which has been so terribly visited upon him. He does not deny, therefore, but admits, that he is guilty of such sins as are common to man; for

who has a breast so pure
But some uncleanly apprehensions
Keep lectures and law-days, and in session sit
With meditations lawful?

but he implies that, to justify such a punishment as his, his sins should have been both many and heinous, and that he is wholly unconscious of such sins as these.

Having advanced his demand, he pauses for a reply, expecting that, now that he has spoken, God will respond. But no response, no answer, is vouchsafed him.

And hence, in *Verse 24*, he expostulates with his Judge. Why does God hide his face from him? why reject his appeal? Does He still hold to his resolve, to refuse all intercourse with him, to treat as an open and convicted enemy one who is really his lover and friend? That is not like God, not worthy of Him; Job's very frailty might plead for him. He is weak (*Verse 25*) as a sere and fallen leaf, frail and unsubstantial as withered stubble. A mere breath would suffice to puff him away: why should God break and terrify him by pouring out the full tempest of his anger against him? Moreover, his nature is peccable and sinful as well as frail. He has inherited taints of blood and defects of will such as are inherent in all men, such therefore as should move the compassion of God, and not provoke Him to anger. He does not claim (*Verse 26*) to have been free from such "usual slips" as are common to man, but he has long since repented and renounced the sins of his youth. Has not God forgiven them? Where, then,

is the mercy, where the justice even, of now exacting from him an accumulated and usurious interest for his youthful debts, debts which he had thought were forgiven and expunged long ago? The frailty of human nature, and its native tendency to evil—a tendency which shews itself most clearly in the young and immature, with whom sin has not yet become a habit—are arguments for compassion, especially when the sins of youth and liberty have been mastered and corrected in maturer years. And yet, in place of shewing any compassion, God has condemned him for them, and inflicted the most terrible punishment upon him. At this very moment he is like a prisoner (*Verses 27, 28*), whose feet have been thrust into the *nervus*, or stocks, into the holes of the hateful clog, or block, in which the feet of a convicted criminal were at once fastened and tortured, and who is exposed to the most watchful and jealous inspection, lest he should stray a single step beyond the narrow limits assigned him. Thus a line, or a circle, has been drawn round the soles of his feet, beyond which he cannot pass; and that although he is too weak and emaciated to stir, although he lies on the *mezbele*, rotting away under the gnawing pangs of his foul disease like a garment consumed by moths.

But here, as we enter on *Chapter xiv.*, his thoughts take a nobler turn. It is for humanity, for the whole race, that he pleads, and not for himself alone; for in all men he finds the same frail and sinful nature of which he is conscious in himself, and in their lot the same exposure to a disproportioned and excessive punishment as in his own. In the familiar, but most impressive and pathetic words and images of *Verses 1 and 2*, he sets forth the *physical* frailty of human life,—its brevity, “short of days;” its sorrowfulness, “satiated with trouble.” It is fragile and evanescent as a flower of the field, fleeting and cold and dark as a shadow which momentarily obscures the light and warmth of the sun. Can it be right, then (*Verse 3*), that a creature so frail, so evanescent, so laden with sorrow, should be dogged with a suspicious and incessant vigilance, and called to a stern judicial account? In *Verse 4* the *moral* frailty of man, which had been glanced at in the

words (*Verse 1*), "*Man, born of woman,*" is set forth in an affirmation which is also a covert protest. Woman, according to the Eastern mode of thought, is the frailer section of humanity; and man, since he is "*born of woman,*" inherits her frailty. According to the Hebrew law, moreover, which in this does but formulate a general Oriental conception, woman is impure during and long after childbirth with an impurity which requires a special expiation, and her offspring necessarily partake in that impurity. The very child of frailty, contaminated from, and even by, his very birth, sinlessness is impossible to man: but if it be impossible, what right has God to expect it? Cleanness cannot come forth from uncleanness. Would that it could! sighs Job: would that purity were possible to man! but, with such an origin, how can it be? Shakespeare tells us that

That nature which condemns its origin
Cannot be bordered certain in itself.

How much more indubitable is it, then, that that nature which derives its origin from an impure and errant source cannot be always kept within its proper boundaries, nor flow on in a pure and limpid stream?

Verses 5 and 6. Man being what he is, not by his own election and fault simply, but, in part at least, by the formative influence of his blood and conditions, if he must not hope to be fully and freely absolved from all his guilt, may at least expect a little pity from God; so much pity as this, perhaps, he may even claim—that God should "*turn from him,*" not be strict to mark and punish the sins for which he is not wholly responsible, but grant him such poor enjoyment as that of a hireling, who must toil on in sorrow and fatigue, but need not be lashed to his labour with a scourge, nor terrified by a fearful looking-for of judgment. If it be God who has made his days on earth so few and miserable, if it be God who has confined him within such narrow moral limits that he can never hope to achieve an unsullied righteousness, it is surely no immodest nor unreasonable demand on God that He should leave man to bear the inevitable miseries of his lot, and not harass and destroy him

by adding intolerable exactions and immedicable stripes to the burden under which he groans.

As Job meditates on the miserable estate of man, even the inanimate world of Nature seems more happily conditioned than “the paragon of animals,” the very master-piece of God. There is more hope of a tree than of man. The tree may be cut down (*Verse 7*), or it may moulder in the ground (*Verse 8*); but, though it die, it will live again: if it only *smell* water, only feel “the breath” of it, it will revive: it will not “cease” as man ceases: if it has been lopped, yet it will shoot forth new branches; if it has died down, yet it will send up new suckers from its root. Possibly, the allusion may be to the palm-tree, of which Shaw¹, the Eastern traveller, says, “When the old trunk dies, there is never wanting one of these offsprings to succeed it.” More probably, the allusion is more general; for Consul Wetzstein² tells us that a common operation of arboriculture in the vicinity of Damascus (of which the Hauran is a close neighbour) is to hew down old trees—such as the vine, the fig-tree, the pomegranate, the citron, the mulberry, the walnut, and the ash—when they have become hollow and decayed; and that, if they are then plentifully supplied with water, the old stumps throw out branches or the old roots suckers within a year, which grow vigorously and luxuriantly, and soon bear fruit. But, continues Job, though there is hope of a tree, there is none for man. Once cut down, once dead, he never revives, never more yields fruit. The pathetic contrast is a familiar one, and is to be found in the literature of all nations. Thus in the *Jagur Weda* we read: “While the tree that has fallen sprouts again from the root fresher than before, from what root does mortal man spring forth when he has fallen by the hand of death?” So, again, in the somewhat hackneyed, but pretty and tender, verses of Moschus we read:

Alas, alas, the mallows when they wither in the border,
Or the green parsley, or the thick thriving dill,
Live again hereafter, and spring up in other years:
But we men, the great, the brave, the wise,

¹ Quoted by Delitzsch *in loco*.

² *Ibid*.

When once we die, lie senseless in the bosom of the earth,
And sleep a long, an endless, an unawaking sleep.

Having turned from the Friends, with their irritating maxims and reproaches, to speak with God, it is quite obvious that Job, even though he has still to address himself to a God who has hidden his face and will make no clear response, has fallen into a more thoughtful, calm, and meditative mood. The bitter irony has left his tone, the storm of passion has subsided. And though there is still a tone of profound sadness and despair in his thoughts, we feel that he is capable of pursuing an even and sequent train of thought; that he is brooding over the great problems of human life undisturbed, absorbed in them, feeling his way towards a solution of them, —so preoccupied with them as to sit withdrawn from the influence of things external to himself. Now it is in such moods that we receive the thoughts that *come* to us we know not how, that the intuitions, on which all our mental conceptions are based, flash up through our customary forms of “mentation,” irradiate them with a new and intenser light, recombine them in new relations, so that they point to other issues—thus raising us to heights of contemplation from which we can see farther into the meaning and end of life than at less auspicious moments. Such a moment had arrived for Job. Brooding in awe and wonder over the fate of man, in his recoil from the very conviction to which he had felt his way, that a tree is more vital than a man, his mind springs aloft in disdain of so base a conclusion, and at least for an instant he catches a glimpse of life and immortality. “Man die, while the tree lives on, or bursts into a new life, another and yet the same? Impossible! A man is of more value than many trees. May it not be, then, that as the tree sinks to the earth and moulders in the ground, until at the breath of water it rises into new and fairer forms of fruitfulness, so man may sink into Hades, only to find there a quiet shelter and repose, until, touched by the Divine ‘breath,’ he too rises and expands into a new and happier life?”

Such seems to have been the process of thought—if we should not rather call it the process of emotion—by which Job reached the hope that yearns and struggles up through

his words in *Verses* 13–15. It is no certainty, no assurance, of a life to come that he gains, but only a peradventure; and on this peradventure he soon relaxes his hold for a time. It is no clear and steadfast insight, but only a bright prophetic glimpse, which is soon lost in the climbing mists of his sorrow and despair. Faith and reason are at strife within him (mark the parenthesis of *Verse* 14), as he looks for a moment across the dark and populous region of Hades to the country that is very far off, so that he cannot be sure for a single moment that there is a path of life even in that dim region and a land of life beyond it. It is little more than a wish that he utters, a yearning; but it is the yearning of a prophetic soul, musing on things to come: and, moreover, this yearning rests on a solid basis, for it is based on the very justice and love of God. His revulsion against the apparent doom of man breeds the longing (*Verse* 13), “O that thou wouldest hide me in Hades,” *i.e.*, as the verb implies, hide me with loving care, as a treasure too precious to be left to the mere accidents of time; “that thou wouldest conceal me till thy wrath be past,” *i.e.* screen me in Hades till this tempest of calamity has blown by, make it what the Egyptians called it, “the Shelter of the Weary:” “that thou wouldest appoint me a set time,”—a *terminus ad quem*—and then “remember me!” But he cannot so much as complete his wish without interruption. The parenthesis which opens the 14th *Verse* shews that the forces of reason and doubt were at work within him, trying to shatter “the beautiful dream and presentiment” of a life beyond the grave, warning him that he was indulging in fancies which it was impossible to sustain by logic or verify by experience. Even while the momentary fervours of hope are hot within him, he hears a cool sceptical voice sounding through them; “But if a man die—really die, you know—can he live again? is not that incredible?” But he is not to be diverted from his course; he will not pause to question and argue: he treads down the rising doubt, and pursues his way the more eagerly. He *will* speak out the yearning of his heart. And so he goes on: If only such a hope of the future were before me, I would stand to my post on earth with an immovable fidelity till I fell at it; even in Hades I would

still stand at it like a sentinel on watch, however long and hard the term of my service, till my discharge, till my relief came. And surely, he argues to himself (in *Verse 15*), such a hope *must* be before me: for if I have such a yearning for God, must not He who implanted it have a corresponding yearning for me? if I long for Him who made me, must not He long for the work of his own lands?

Thus Job bases his presentiment of a future state both on the justice and on the love of God. It is incredible to his reason that this tangled skein of life is not to be unravelled out beyond the grave; and it is incredible to his heart that he should love his Maker more than his Maker loves him. And on what safer ground of reason and speculation can even *we* build the hope that, when we die, we shall live again? It was a wonderful advance for Job to have made, and might well have compensated him for all his sufferings, that the mere wish to escape extinction should have grown into a presentiment, a persuasion, of a life in death and beyond it. To this persuasion we shall find him returning with clearer insight and an added strength of conviction in the next Colloquy. But for the present, as was natural, the contrast between what he yearns to be and what he *is* almost immediately occurs to his mind, and the bright light of his presentiment expires in the settled gloom of his grief and despair. What he shall be, he can only conjecture and hope; what he is, his sorrows only too feelingly persuade him. He is a criminal—for here (*Verse 16*) he reverts to the ruling image of this noble passage—at the bar of an incensed and powerful Judge, who dogs his every step and maintains a keen and incessant watch for every sin. All the documents (*Verse 17*) that go to prove his guilt are stored up in the scrip, or pouch, which hangs from the Judge's belt, ready to be produced against him at the most opportune moment; and the proofs of his iniquity, *i.e.* of his most heinous offence, are even sewed up in an interior scrip, so anxious is the Judge not by any mischance to lose them, so bent on finding him guilty.

Some authorities—Delitzsch, for example—read the last line of the verse, “Thou sewest *on* mine iniquity;” and take it to mean, “Thou devisest additions to mine iniquity,” tacking

on invented and still heavier crimes to the prisoner's real misdeeds. But the construction is a little forced, I think, and quite unnecessary; nor is Job at present in a mood with which so terrible an insinuation against the rectitude of God would be in keeping. He is not now recklessly charging God with injustice, but mournfully complaining of his severity.

The results of that incessant and unsparing severity he proceeds (*Verses 18 and 19*) to set forth in several analogies taken from the natural phenomena of the Hauran,—the crumbling mountain, the shattered rock, the water-worn stones, the surface of the land carried away by floods. With us mountains do not “fall;” but in volcanic regions, such as the Hauran, a mountain, undermined by subterraneous fires, often falls in and crumbles away. In such regions, too, earthquakes are frequent, and so violent as to shake and shatter the solid rocks. In the fertile wadys, moreover, with their rushing streams, now dried up, and again overflowing their banks as the heavy rains fall on the neighbouring hills and plateaus, great stones fantastically hollowed out by the water, and floods that swept away the cultivated land on the borders of the stream, must have been too common to attract much notice. These, therefore, were fit and natural emblems of the instability of human life and fortune, of the sudden adversities by which man's prosperity is swept away, of the subtle forces by which it is sapped, of the succession of calamities which wear and waste it down. Viewed as part of his plea, or Defence, Job probably meant to convey by these emblems that, instead of visiting men with an unsparing and excessive severity, God should rather take pity on them and forbear; since if even the great mountains crumble, and the solid rocks are shattered, and the hard stones are scooped out, and the firm earth is washed away, in what constant and imminent peril must frail man be, should he be exposed to the untempered blasts of the Divine anger? But (*Verses 20–22*), instead of restraining his anger, God gives it free scope—destroying the hope of man, prevailing over him evermore, changing his aspect, and sending him away to that dim and remote region where he no longer has any portion in, or any knowledge of, aught that

is done under the sun ; where all his thoughts are centered on himself, and he feels nothing but his own pain and loss ; where the very prosperity of his children brings him no relief, and their adversities trouble him not, since he has reached a bourn beyond which no tidings travel, and breathes an air, if he breathe at all, in which all earthly interests expire.

Here, then, the First Colloquy closes, and we have only to ask, What is the upshot of it all ? Whither has it conducted Job ? At what point has this “strong swimmer in his agony” arrived ? What has he gained by his fidelity to his convictions in the teeth of so bitter an opposition from his Friends, and of so many facts of experience and consciousness which he found it impossible to reconcile with them ?

1. It is the least of his gains that he has won a logical victory over the Friends. They had little to urge except that the Heavens are just, “and of our pleasant vices make instruments to plague us :” they had little to reproach him with save that by his despair he was shewing

a will most incorrect to Heaven,
A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,
An understanding simple and unschool'd ;

and even these points they had pressed on him,—Zophar excepted perhaps,—with consideration and gentleness, rather as inciting him to penitence and meekness than as censuring him for his sins. Such arguments and reproaches could have but slight effect on one who was conscious that he was innocent of the secret vices of which they suspected him, and that in his misery and perplexity—and, above all, in their unfounded suspicions—he had an ample apology for his impatience. To refute their arguments, and to bear down their reproaches with reproaches that were true, and still more keen and weighty than their own, was a comparatively easy task.

2. But he had won a far more difficult and honourable victory than this : he had refuted and conquered the great adversary—Satan, the accuser. Darkened and agitated and confused as his soul was, Job had *not* renounced God ; he had shewn that he could serve Him for nought, nay, continue to

trust and serve Him even when, from a manifest and bountiful Friend, He had turned to be a stern and silent Adversary. Never was man more fiercely tried; never was man more faithful under the fiercest trial. Othello finely complains :

Had it pleased Heaven
To try me with affliction ; had it rained
All kinds of sores and shames on my bare head,
Steep'd me in poverty to the very lips,
Given to captivity me and my utmost hopes,
I should have found in some place of my soul
A drop of patience : but, alas, to make me
A fixed figure for the scorn of Time
To point his slow unmoving finger at !
Yet could I bear that too ; well, very well :
But there, where I have garner'd up my heart,
Where either I must live or bear no life,
The fountain from which my current runs
Or else dries up,—to be discarded *thence* !

But Job had borne both the trials which Othello affirms that he could have borne with patience, and the very trial, only raised to an indefinitely higher power, which he avows himself incapable of bearing. For Job had been brought down from the very summit of prosperity to be steeped in poverty to the very lips. All kinds of sores and shames had been rained down on his bare head. He and his utmost hopes had been given to captivity. He had become as a fixed figure for the scorn of Time to point his slow unmoving finger at. And in the very degree in which the Maker of all stands above the level of his fairest creature, in that incalculably higher degree it was true of him that he had been discarded from the very shrine where he had garnered up his heart, where he must live or bear no life, that he had been cut off from the fountain from which his current ran or else dried up. He had set his heart on *God* ; apart from God he had no life : God was the very source and fountain of his being and his happiness. And God had renounced him, discarded him, turned against him. Still Job would not renounce God ! True, we have heard him break out into passionate and mutinous charges against God, reproaching Him for his severity, for his injustice, and even for taking pleasure in the discomfiture of the righteous. But

the God whom he thus assailed was the God of his Friends—that conception of God to which they clave, and from which as yet he could not wholly shake himself free. And no man who has studied this Poem can doubt that, while Job was being gradually compelled to renounce this Phantom of the current creed, he was also seeking, and gradually finding, a new God—another, and yet the same, gradually framing a more worthy conception of his Divine Lord and King; cleaving passionately, meanwhile, to that true and living God who stands high above all our poor and imperfect conceptions of Him. Assuredly, at least, no man who has himself been constrained to resign an earlier and baser conception of the Divine Character, that he might win his way to a nobler and more satisfying conception, and is conscious that through the whole process of doubt and change he has never really let God go, never wholly lost touch with Him, will be perplexed at finding in this poem a God whom Job renounces side by side with the God to whom he cleaves with a noble and pathetic fidelity. It was not God Himself, but that dark misleading shadow of God projected on the thought and imagination of his age, from which Job revolted. And hence his victory over the Adversary was complete. So far from renouncing the God who no longer loaded him with benefits, he was led, by his very deprivations and miseries, to a clearer knowledge of Him, a more assured and triumphant faith in Him.

3. Besides his victory over the Friends, and his far greater victory over the Adversary, Job carries off, as the spoils of victory, at least an inkling of two of the greatest truths even now revealed to man, truths of which it is doubtful whether any other man of his age had so much as a glimpse. He gained, as we have seen, a presentiment both of the Incarnation and of the Resurrection from the dead. Wordsworth describes a memorable, though not infrequent, experience in the well-known lines:

And, when the stream
Which overflowed the soul was passed away,
A consciousness remained that it had left,
Deposited upon the silent shore
Of memory, images and precious thoughts,
That shall not die, and cannot be destroyed.

Job's soul had been submerged by a flood of sorrows and doubts till it had well nigh been overwhelmed; but when that flood passed away, among the precious and imperishable thoughts it left behind it were these;—that an Arbiter, a Mediator, between God and man, might be looked for, who should lay his hands on them both and bring them together in judgment; and that though man must die, he may live again when touched by the quickening breath of God. And to win such gains as these, who would not be content to wade through a very sea of sorrow?

SECTION IV.
THE SECOND COLLOQUY.

CHAPTERS XV.-XXI.

IN the First Colloquy, as we have seen, the Friends of Job had contended that the Judge of all the earth must do right, that his Providence both must, and did, even in this present life, mete out to every man the due reward of his deeds,—good to the good, and evil to the evil; and from this large conclusion they had drawn the particular inference that, since Job was suffering the punishment proper to guilt, he must of necessity have incurred a guilt which, though hidden from man, was known to God. In his reply to them, Job had called even their main argument in question, and had passionately denied the inference they drew from it,—indignantly asserting his innocence of the charge which they insinuated rather than alleged against him, and even impugning the justice of the God who, knowing him to be innocent, nevertheless treated him as though he were a sinner above all men.

In the Second Colloquy, the argument of the Poem is advanced a step, though only by narrowing and defining it; the Friends having by this time discovered that they had fallen into a common fault of controversialists, that of starting from premisses larger and wider than they needed for their conclusion. And now, too, the tone of the speakers has sensibly changed, the Friends growing more bitter and impatient, while Job grows more calm and self-possessed.

As Job had refuted the arguments which they had adduced for the manifest and invariable equity of the Divine Providence, and as, moreover, they are not even yet prepared to charge him with this particular sin or that to his face, the

Friends take closer order on narrower ground. They no longer contend that the good always receive good from the hand of God; they drop that large assertion from their argument, and are content with affirming that the evil receive evil,—their implication still being that, since Job is suffering evils so many and strange, he must have provoked them by some secret but heinous sin. All they now contend for is that

'Tis the eternal law that where guilt is
Sorrow shall answer it.

And they are so indignant with him for shamelessly denying his guilt, and so terrified by his bold assaults on the justice of Heaven, that, though they will not, or cannot, bring any specific charge against him, their tone grows harsh and even sarcastic. They are as much out of sympathy with him as though they themselves had never known sin and grief, and no longer speak to him as men

Who, by the art of known and feeling sorrows,
Are pregnant to good pity.

They make no further effort to win him to repentance by dilating on the compassion and bounty of God, nor express any hope that he will confess and renounce his sin. They cease to assure him that the Divine judgments are corrective as well as punitive, or even to urge upon him the thought, so frequent on their lips in the previous Colloquy,—

Oh, sir, to wilful men,
The injuries which they themselves procure
Must be their schoolmasters.

At first, and while they were still in sympathy with him, they had felt it was much to be lamented that he had no such mirrors as would turn his hidden unworthiness into his eye, that he might see himself as he was; and they had tried, gently and considerately as they thought (Chap. xv. 11), to hint this hidden unworthiness to him, and to persuade him to see himself as they saw him. But he had indignantly repelled their insinuations: his constant reply to them had been,

You would have me seek into myself
For that which is not in me.

So that now they felt driven to the resolve: since he cannot see himself, we must discover to him that of himself which even yet he knows not of.¹

In his replies to the Friends there is a corresponding change both in the argument and in the tone of Job. He still calls on them to charge him openly with the sins they still covertly suggest, to *prove* the guilt they assume. But, besides this, he meets them victoriously on the narrower ground of argument which they have taken up. So soon as he clearly sees what they would be at, he denies that the Divine Providence is retributive even in so far as the wicked are concerned. In a very noble and striking passage (Chap. xxi.) he affirms that, so far from being the most miserable, they are often the most fortunate and untroubled of men,—happy in their life, honoured in their death. And it is while he is brooding over this strange mystery that he is once more driven, and driven now once for all, to the conviction that, since this life is not retributive, there must be a retributive life to come (Chap. xix. 23–27).

Another train of thought runs through his speeches in this Second Colloquy, which fully accounts for the happy change we detect in his tone. Even in his first encounter with the Friends he had averred his persuasion that God knew he was not guilty (Chap. x. 7)—as indeed God Himself confesses that He did; and that, could he only gain access to his Divine Judge, he had no fear lest he should be not acquitted by Him (Chap. ix. 32–35, and Chap. xiii. 14–19). And now, though he still cannot see God, he is sure that “somewhere in the wide heavens” God is watching him, and testifying to his innocence (Chap. xvi. 19). He is so sure of it that he confidently calls on God Himself to be a Surety for him with Himself, since none other will stand sponsor for him (Chap. xvii. 3). Formerly, and for moments, he had lost hope of himself, because he had lost touch with God, because he doubted whether he any longer dwelt even “in the suburbs” of God’s good pleasure. But now the conviction is establishing itself in his mind that, though he cannot see God, God can see him, though he cannot make out how God can be true to

¹ See the dialogue between Brutus and Cassius in “Julius Cæsar.” Act i. Scene 2.

him, nevertheless *He is* true—so true as to be both his Witness and his Surety: what wonder is it, then, that his tone grows more calm and assured? True, men have failed and disappointed him, but he is growing used to that disappointment; the first shock of it has spent itself, and he expects but little of them. True, even God Himself had failed and disappointed him, but, as he begins to see more clearly, it was only the phantom God of the current theology, not the real God who sits in heaven ruling the lives and destinies of men. *He* was true and just, and always had been, always would be, just and true. How natural, then, that throughout this Colloquy Job should turn more and more from the men who had failed him, revolt from the dogmas which had misrepresented God to him, and cast himself on the God who could never fail him! It was impossible to convince the Friends of his “integrity;” his assertions and pleas only confirmed them in the false conclusion they had inferred, not from his words and deeds, but from their own theories and conjectures. Say what he would, they did but

construe things, after their fashion,
Clean from the purpose of the things themselves.

Why, then, should he trouble himself to argue with them, or be overmuch incensed by insinuations which sprang from their own ignorance, and even ran right in the teeth of all they knew about him?

More and more, therefore, he appeals, from the men who had so misconstrued and so “misquoted” him, to the God who was watching him, and testifying to him, in heaven. Their inferences and reproaches were built in the mere air of speculation, not on any solid foundation, nor compelled to square with the facts. And hence there is less vehemence, less passion and excitement, in his tone. Not that he is altogether free from them even yet. His soul is still vexed

with passions of some difference
Which give a soil to his behaviour.

At times he is sad, as sad as ever, as impatient of truisms and platitudes, as fierce in resentment of the wrong done him both

by God and by man. But, on the whole, he is calming down ; the waves do not run so high, nor the wind beat so vehemently : the gloom, once so dense and impenetrable, is now relieved by broken and transient lights, nay, even by fixed stars of hope which shine on though at times the rolling clouds may hide them from his sight. As we study this Second Colloquy, in short, we shall come on many illustrations of Wordsworth's fine lines :—

Within the soul a faculty abides
That with interpositions, which would hide
And darken, so can deal, that they become
Contingencies of pomp ; and serve to exalt
Her native brightness.

(1.) ELIPHAZ TO JOB.

CHAPTER XV.

Eliphaz, the wisest, and probably the oldest, of the three Friends is, as usual, the first to speak. As is also usual with the speakers in this great controversy, he commences with personalities, and only gradually approaches his new theme. And, still as usual, his speech is at once more thoughtful, more artistic, and even more considerate than that of either Bildad or Zophar. But even *his* spirit is hot within him ; and though he so far tries to be fair that he will advance no opinion against Job for which he cannot adduce higher authority than his own, he evidently intends Job to see his own likeness in the sombre picture he now paints of the wicked man, and endeavours with his whole force to prove that, if Job's conscience still pronounces him innocent, that can only be because he has paltered with it till it has grown "subtle," inaccurate, insincere. He had been content before to deduce Job's guilt from general propositions, from the accepted dogmas of the time ; *now* he needs no argument to prove it, for Job's own words, his passionate defence of himself and his equally passionate impeachment of the justice of God, render his guilt self-evident. Why should Job assail the current standards of

thought and action if he were not conscious that they condemned him?

If we would trace the continuity of the Argument, if we would see how many strands of thought are carried over from the First Colloquy into the Second, we must be at the pains of marking the point from which Eliphaz starts. That point is the claim, advanced on both sides, to a pre-eminent acquaintance with the Divine Wisdom. In the last speech of the Friends in the First Colloquy (Chap. xi.), Zophar had so magnified the wisdom of God against Job, as to imply his own greater insight into it. If Job saw as far as *he* did into the Wisdom which shapes the lot and fate of men, whatever his conscience might say of his innocence, he would nevertheless have been dumb; he would not have opened his mouth before God, much less against God. In that inscrutable Wisdom, compared with which even the wisest of men was "without understanding" and of a "hollow heart," lay the secret of the strange and sudden calamities with which Job had been overwhelmed. Could God but be induced to come forth from his place and manifest his wisdom, even Job himself would be compelled to admit that God had not "remembered all his guilt," had not punished him to the height of his ill-desert.

All this seems to have stung Job deeply, since it implied that, as compared with the Friends, he was ignorant both of himself and of God, and most of all, probably, because this intolerable assumption of superiority so evidently sprang from an utter want of sympathy with him in the agony and passion of his living death. Hence through his reply to Zophar there runs a thread of perpetual sarcasm against this assumed superiority, blended with pathetic lamentations over the depth to which he must have sunk before they could have dared to take this tone with him. He is never weary of ringing the changes on "the wisdom" which was the key-note and master-word of Zophar's unfortunate oration. "No doubt *wisdom* will die with you," he begins (Chap. xii. 2, 3); "but I have understanding as well as ye: I fall not beneath you." "With God is wisdom," he continues and admits (Chap. xii. 13); "counsel and understanding are his:" and proceeds to give a far larger and loftier delineation than they were able to reach

of the Sovereign Intelligence which moulds the lot of men, and conducts all the changes and events of time to their predestined close. "Lo, all this mine eye hath seen," he goes on (Chap. xiii. 1, 2, 12); "mine ear hath heard and noted it; what ye know I know also." *And, more*: "For ye but patch up old saws;" "Your maxims are maxims of ashes, your strongholds strongholds of clay;" "Worthless bunglers are ye all." Their only hope of proving themselves wise is to be dumb; all he can promise them is that if they hold their peace, *that* shall be counted to them for wisdom (Chap. xiii. 5).

It is from this point that Eliphaz now starts, asking (Chapter xv. 2), "Will *a wise man* answer with windy lore, and fill his breast with the east wind?" Job's claim to wisdom is hardly borne out (Verses 3 and 4) by his mode of argument. Judged by his own words, he was more than unwise; he was impious and irreverent: his own mouth condemned him (Verses 5 and 6). And this claim to superior wisdom—from whence did he derive it? Was he the Adam of the race, the first born of men (Verse 7)? Had he a seat in the Celestial Divan; and, listening to the secret counsels of Heaven, had he monopolized wisdom to himself (Verse 8)? And, in fine, was he wiser than the fathers, the sages of the purest race, whose wisdom was as uncontaminated as their blood (Verses 9–11)?

His whole demeanour was of a piece with this monstrous claim to superior, or even to exclusive, wisdom. His bearing toward them, the Friends, was unbecoming, for they were bringing him not their own words simply, but "the consolations of God." His bearing toward God was still more unbecoming, for he had launched wild and passionate charges against Him, impugning the Divine justice and asserting his own integrity: and yet how could any man be pure in God's sight? Even the heavens, the purest work of God's hands, were not pure to Him: how much less, then, a creature so impure as man (Verses 12–16)!

These personalities disposed of, Eliphaz proceeds to his main theme, and expounds that mystery of suffering which is no longer a mystery to him. He does not now, as formerly, trouble himself to contend for the universal equity of the

Divine Providence; he limits himself to the sterner half of it, that which metes out punishment to the guilty. While he still spins round in the same circle of thought as before, he confines himself to the darker segment of it. And in his treatment of his theme he betrays the very bitterness of spirit which we have detected in the personalities which introduce it. The one sign of relenting and grace he shews is "the polite indirection" of his words. As in the earlier Colloquy he had fallen back on a Divine Oracle, so now, still loath to advance his own unsupported opinions against those of Job, he falls back on the teaching of a pure and unvarying Tradition (Verses 17-35). With an air of relief, of triumph even, he adduces the sayings of certain sages, certain

good old chronicles
Who had so long walk'd hand in hand with time,

that their words are to be received as of an Oracular authority. As the unbroken voice of Antiquity is with him, he feels that,

Instructed by the antiquary times,
He must, he is, he cannot but be wise;

wiser than Job, though Job had claimed to be wiser than he. From these ancient maxims, these "grandsire phrases," he draws the materials of a most sombre and lurid picture of the sinner and his course—of the terrors that haunt him, of the chastisement that falls on him, of the end that awaits him; intending that Job should see in this picture at least some dim resemblance to himself. And, what is very notable, for it shews how much more stern and bitter even Eliphaz has grown, he closes his harangue without a single invitation to repentance, without a word of sympathy or a suggestion of hope.

CHAPTER XV.

1. *Then answered Eliphaz the Temanite and said :*
2. *Should the wise man answer with windy lore,
 And fill his breast with the East wind,*
3. *Reasoning with words that cannot profit,
 And arguments which prove nothing ?*

4. *Nay, thou dost make piety void
 And restrain devotion before God :*
5. *For thine own mouth proclaimeth thine iniquity,
 Though thou choosest the tongue of the subtle ;*
6. *Thine own mouth convicteth thee, and not I,
 And thine own lips testify against thee.*
7. *Wast thou born first, O man,
 And wast thou brought forth before the hills ?*
8. *Hast thou listened in the Council of God,
 And dost thou engross wisdom to thyself ?*
9. *What knowest thou which we know not,
Or what dost thou understand and it is not with us ?*
10. *With us are both the aged and the hoary-headed
 Who are older than thy sire.*
11. *Are the consolations of God too little for thee,
 And the words we gently speak ?*
12. *Whither doth thine heart carry thee away,
 And at what do thine eyes kindle,*
13. *That thou frettest thy spirit against God,
 And scatterest such specches from thy mouth ?*
14. *What is man that he should be pure,
Or the woman-born that he should be righteous ?*
15. *Behold He putteth no trust in his Holy Ones,
 And the heavens are not pure in his eyes :*
16. *How much more loathsome and unclean is man,
 Who drinketh in iniquity like water !*
17. *I will shew thee ; hearken thou to me,
 For what I have seen will I declare—*
18. *That which the sages have openly taught,
 Handing it down from their fathers ;*
19. *To whom alone the land was given,
 And no stranger passed through their midst :*
20. *“ The wicked trembleth through all his days,
Through the many years reserved to the oppressor :*
21. *Voices of terror resound in his ears,
 Even in times of peace the spoiler falleth upon him ;*
22. *He is never sure that he shall come back out of darkness,
 And he is watched for by the sword :*
23. *He roameth after bread [asking] ‘ Where is it ? ’
 He knoweth that a day of darkness is close at hand ;*
24. *Distress and anguish affright him,
They prevail over him like a king equipped for onslaught,*
25. *Because he stretched out his hand against God,*

- And hardened himself against the Almighty,
 26. *Ran upon Him with stiffened neck,*
 With the thick bosses of his shields ;
 27. *Because he covered his face with fatness,*
 And folded flesh on his flanks :
 28. *And he dwelt in desolate cities,*
 In houses which none should inhabit,
 Ordained to be ruins.
 29. *He shall not be rich, neither shall his substance last,*
 Nor shall his wealth weigh upon the earth ;
 30. *He shall never quit darkness :*
 A flame shall burn up his branches,
 And at a puff of breath shall he pass away.
 31. *Let him not trust in vanity ; he is deceived ;*
 For vanity shall be his recompense :
 32. *It shall come upon him ere his day be spent,*
 And his branch shall not be green ;
 33. *He shall shake off his grapes sour like the vine,*
 And shed his blossom like the olive :
 34. *For the household of the impure shall be desolate,*
 And a fire shall devour the tents of injustice ;
 35. *They conceived mischief, and shall bring forth iniquity ;*
 Yea, their breast frameth deceit."

Verse 2.—Job had cast ridicule on the pretensions to eminent wisdom advanced by the Friends, especially by so "slight and unmeritable" a man as Zophar, and had claimed a higher wisdom than theirs. Hence Eliphaz opens by demanding whether it was like a wise man to answer with words as blustering as the wind, as noxious as the east wind. In *Verse 3* he translates his own metaphor, and plainly charges Job with having used unreasonable and unprofitable arguments such as no wise man would have condescended to employ.

Verse 4.—Job was not only unwise ; he was also irreverent, irreligious. By his wild and whirling speeches he, whom men held to be a model of piety, brought religion itself into contempt, since he assailed one of its fundamental assumptions—that God is just, and so diminished that *devout meditation*, that reverent thoughtfulness, that awe and modesty of spirit, which becomes man in the presence of God.

Verses 5 and 6.—There is no longer any need, therefore, to scrutinize his life for proof of his guilt, to produce the

definite charges which he had so passionately demanded. His own mouth has proved the guilt which his Friends had inferred from the calamities that had befallen him. All that they had ever alleged or implied was now demonstrated by his own unruly and unruled member, by his violent and irreverent tongue.

Verses 7-10.—But even yet Eliphaz cannot get out of his mind the slighting way in which Job had flung back—in the rough question, “Who knows not such things as these?”—the pretensions of the Friends to instruct him in the Divine Wisdom; and he here returns to the point again, demanding, in three ironical questions, how Job came by that pre-eminence in wisdom which he assumed. (1) Was he the first man God made? (2) Had he sat in the Cabinet of Heaven? And (3) how could he possibly be wiser than they, when they had on their side the highest and most ancient, and therefore most indubitable, authority? The question, “Wast thou born first of, or among, men?” rests on the tradition that “the first-created man, because coming straight from the hand of God, had the most direct and profound insight into the mysteries of the world which came into existence at the same time with himself.” Schlottmann compares with it the ironical proverb of the Hindoos: “Yes, indeed, he was the first man: no wonder that he is so wise!”

The figure of the second question is, of course, taken from the divan of an Oriental prince, in which state secrets were discussed; and the sarcastic insinuation of it is, obviously, that no man could be so wise as Job pretended to be, no man could affect a monopoly of wisdom, unless he had frequented the council-chamber of the Almighty. It is not unnatural or infrequent, perhaps, for a man whose claim to pre-eminent wisdom has been traversed to charge his opponent with advancing a similar claim; but it shews how the spirit of Eliphaz had been chafed, that he should now resent in Job a claim to wisdom which he would once have cheerfully conceded, and will no longer

Give him allowance for the better man;

that he should misconstrue Job's claim to an equal or higher wisdom than his own into a claim to the monopoly of wisdom:

and, above all, that, instead of bearing with his friend's infirmity and sympathizing in his sorrows, he should take this mocking and sarcastic tone with him.

Considering how conclusively Job had dealt with Bildad's appeal to antiquity in Chapter xii. Verses 11–13, it is a little wonderful that, in his third question, Eliphaz should have ventured on a similar appeal; and that he should repeat and elaborate it in the closing Verses of this Chapter. But for the present he does not dwell on it.

He passes from it, in *Verse 11*, to reproach Job with having rejected "the consolations of God," by which he means the assurances which, in God's name, they had given him in the previous Colloquy of deliverance from his misery, restoration to happy conditions, and a tranquil old age, if only he would confess and renounce his guilt; and with having rejected these consolations although they had urged them upon him in so gentle and considerate a spirit. Some gentleness and consideration they had unquestionably shewn him *from their point of view*; but as that point of view, the assumption of his guilt, was an intolerable insult to him, and was, moreover, quite wide of the facts, it is no wonder that their "consolations" had proved too small for him.

As Eliphaz thus complacently purrs on, forgetting that "whatever praises itself but in the deed, devours the deed in the praise," possibly some gesture of natural astonishment and indignation on the part of Job arrests him, and reminds him once more of the hard and impious speeches which Job had launched against God; for (*Verses 12 and 13*) he cries, "Whither doth thine heart carry thee away, and at what do thine eyes kindle with anger? Why, instead of accepting the consolations of God, dost thou fret thy spirit against Him, and respond to our gentleness so ungently?" Plainly, the two men are moving along parallel lines—Eliphaz on the assumption of Job's guilt, and Job on the conviction of his own innocence; and, so long as they keep to them, can never meet. They do but chafe each other even when they try to be most reasonable and considerate. Let Eliphaz state his conviction of Job's guilt as indirectly and tenderly as he will, he can but inflame the anger of Job, since it is *that*, and not the form in which it is put, which he resents.

In *Verse 14* Eliphaz quotes Job's own words (Chap. xiv. 1-4) about the inherited and inevitable impurity of man that is born of woman,—striking him with his own weapon, as it were, and convicting him out of his own mouth. In *Verse 15* Eliphaz quotes himself (Chap. iv. 18) on the impurity of the very heavens in God's sight, and on the frailty of the very angels—as if to shew that Job had not yet mastered the very first lesson he had been taught. And in *Verse 16*, he draws the inevitable inference from these premisses, viz., that if the heavens and the angels are not impeccable, how much less man, who so lusts after iniquity that he drinks it in like water. In short, he repeats the old slander, the Satanic slander, against man, in order that he may thus justify the ways of God.

Of course he intends Job to make a personal application of this terrible description of the depravity of the human race, to see his own face in this distorting glass, and to conclude, let his reason and conscience say what they will, that he *must* be loathsome and unclean before God, possessed by an insatiable thirst for iniquity. How gross the libel, we know; for while Eliphaz was depicting Job as loathsome and unclean to God, God was boasting of him as a perfect man and an upright, who, so far from lusting after evil, eschewed it. And what we know, Job felt. All the diatribes and libels and sarcasms of the Friends were but as a hot malignant wind, against which he must strive as best he could. He did not deny the depravity of man; *i.e.*, he did not deny that in every man there is that which is corrupt and impure; but neither would he deny that, by some men at least, these tendencies to impurity and corruption have been checked and subdued. Men might be unrighteous, but they might also be righteous. Conscious that he himself was upright, he would not draw the inference to which Eliphaz urged him, nor admit that, since all men were impure, he was therefore an open and convicted sinner.

In the second section of his harangue, Eliphaz returns to and expands the point he had touched and dropped in *Verse 10*. He formally appeals to the wisdom of antiquity, to the

sages of old time—just as certain modern divines constantly hark back on “the fathers”—hoping, I suppose, that he may handle this argument more successfully than Bildad had done in Chapter viii., or that at least he might reinforce it by citing another, and a more authoritative, series of traditions. For, while Bildad appealed to the wise men of Egypt, Eliphaz presents a string of proverbs handed down from the ancient sages of the purest-blooded Arabian races, with whom, as himself a Temanite, he would naturally be familiar. As in his first speech he had given weight to his argument by citing a mysterious Oracle from which he had learned that no man can be pure in the sight of his Maker; so now he gives an added force to his argument that the wicked, even when they be in great prosperity, have, and know that they have, a terrible doom impending over them, by quoting from the Arab “fathers” the maxims in which they had expressed this view of the lot of the wicked. Consul Wetzstein affirms that the dogma which these “sayings” illustrate is still a ruling theme of Arab proverb and tradition. Such a feat as stringing together a collection of ancient Arabian “sentences,” and converting them to his own use, is quite in the manner of our Poet, to whom such literary *tours de force* were very dear.¹ And, as we shall see, there are several indications in these sayings themselves that they are of Arabian origin. But, whatever their derivation, they are the answer of Eliphaz to Job’s contention, (Chap. xii. Verses 6 *et seq.*) that it is the wicked who prosper, and the pious who are a mark for all the slings and arrows of Misfortune.

Verses 17–19 are simply the solemn preface which Eliphaz prefixes to his catena of quotations, and correspond to Verses 12–16 of Chapter iv., in which he introduces the Oracle. But in Verse 19 there is a markedly Arab touch; for to this day the Arabs lay no less stress on purity of descent than Eliphaz does. And, indeed, it is now admitted that the freer a race is from intermixtures the purer are its traditions. Obviously Eliphaz insists on this point in order to give weight to the quotations he is about to adduce. When the race from which he sprang was in quiet possession of their own land, before

¹ Comp. Chap. iv. 10, 11, Chap. vi. 15–20, and Chap. viii. 8–18.

they had corrupted the purity of their blood by intermarriage with other races, they would stand nearer to the fountains of Original Tradition, and would be more likely to keep that living water uncontaminated.

Then, from *Verse 20* onward, follow these maxims of a wise and pure Antiquity. Most of them are very simple, and carry with them the air of a time when men took less subtle and complicated, but also less accurate, views of human life and destiny than we may find even in the Book of Job itself. No one had then questioned the narrow and insufficient dogma, that good comes only and always to the good, and evil only and always to the evil. The moral colours had not then been differentiated; everything was either very white or very black. I need not enter on a formal and detailed exposition of sayings which, for the most part, explain themselves. In *Verses 20-24* we have a graphic description of the uneasy and apprehensive conscience of the sinner. In *Verses 25-27* this restless and haunted conscience is traced to his full-fed and arrogant opposition to the will of God.

All this is simple and plain; but in *Verse 28* the sinner's constant and climbing fear is attributed to a second capital sin, or, rather, to the very climax of his sins. *He dwelt in desolate cities, in houses which none should inhabit, ordained to be ruins*; and as to our English ears there is no sound of offence in such a sin as that, a few words of explanation become requisite. What the Poet means is, I apprehend, that the wicked man he is describing has shewn his contempt for the Divine Will by dwelling in houses or cities which God has judged and cursed for the crimes of their former inhabitants. Such an act as this was held by the Arabs, as by most Oriental races, to be nothing short of a public and deliberate defiance of the Almighty, and is so held to this day. As one who yields to inordinate passion is cast out from the fellowship of the Arabian tribes, and stigmatized as "one who is beaten in his conflict with God;" as no one of them dare pronounce the name of Satan, because God has cursed *him*, without adding, "God's ban on him!" so no man presumes to inhabit places which he believes God has doomed to deso-

lation. Such villages and cities, ruined by frequent judgments, are common in the Arabian Desert. They are held to be places where *the Dîn Ibrâhîm*, i.e., "the religion of Abraham," has been notoriously transgressed. The city of *Nigr*, in Arabia Petræa, for instance, which consists of thousands of dwellings, some richly ornamented, cut in the solid rock, has this doom upon it. Without looking round, and muttering prayers for the Divine protection, the wandering Arab hurries through its deserted streets, as do the caravans of pilgrims on their way to Mecca, not daring to linger, lest they should provoke the wrath of Heaven. To *dwell* in such a city would be regarded with horror, as a sin so insolent and enormous as to be almost incredible.¹

There may have been such buildings, or even such villages, on Job's vast estate; but, embittered as he was, we can hardly suppose that Eliphaz meant to insinuate that Job had been guilty of a sin at once so easily discovered and so monstrously opposed to all the pious instincts of the time, as to dwell in them, or even to cause his dependents to dwell in them. Eliphaz is quoting; and he might well quote a proverb so picturesque without intending any directly personal application of it. At the same time it is only too probable he meant to insinuate that the enormous and unparalleled calamities of Job suggested that he had been guilty of some sin equally offensive to God.

In *Verse 31*—"Let him not trust in *vanity*; for *vanity* shall be his recompense"—there is a play on words—or rather a play on a word, a *double entendre*—such as is common in Hebrew poetry. The word I have translated "*vanity*" covers both "*evil*" and "*calamity*;" it emphasizes the unreality or nothingness of opposition to the Divine will and law and order. "Powerful or successful as it may seem for a time, it must prove in the end unprofitable" and disastrous. And under this play on the word "*vanity*" a Hebrew would instantly detect the meaning that *vanity* in one sense was to be recompensed by *vanity* in another, that sin has calamity for its wage.

¹ I am indebted for this Note to Consul Wetzstein, as quoted by Delitzsch *in loco*.

Verse 32 simply states the fact that this wage for the day is commonly paid *before* evening.

In *Verse 33* we have images familiar to Eastern literature, and taken straight from facts which every man might observe for himself. The vine, in its earlier stages especially, and always when it fruits, is very tender, very open to various forms of disease, in which its unripened grapes fall like leaves in autumn. And the Syrian olive, which bears copiously in its first, third, and fifth year, rests from bearing in its second, fourth, and sixth. But it blossoms even during the years of rest, the blossom falling off before the berry is formed. "In spring one may see the bloom, on the slightest breath of wind, shed like snowflakes, and perishing by millions." Such, so transient and so unprofitable, is the life of the wicked; evanescence and unfruitfulness are written on his lot: so at least thought Eliphaz and the authorities on whom he leaned,—surely with a strange blindness to many sufficiently patent facts.

According to him and them, too, as we learn from *Verse 34*, every trace of the wicked man perishes; not a vestige of him is left to tell of all the labour he did under the sun, or of the doom which fell upon him,—a statement even more untrue to the facts of human life and history than that which preceded it.

2. JOB TO ELIPHAZ.

CHAPTERS XVI. AND XVII.

When we first glance at Job's reply to Eliphaz we may think him as sad, as indignant, as passionate as ever: for he still confronts the friends with a sarcasm at least as keen as their own; he still regards the calamities which have beaten him to the dust with loathing and resentment; and he still charges God both with having inflicted these calamities upon him, and with having inflicted them unjustly. But if we look at his reply more closely we shall see that a radical change

has passed upon him, that he is now groping his way through darkness toward the light,—disengaging himself from the inopportune and irritating platitudes which the Friends still cram into his ear against the stomach of his sense, and rising to the amazing discovery that, behind the God whom he had hitherto worshipped, there was a God whom as yet he had not known, and that therefore there might be a light for him even in the darkness of death itself, and hope even in and beyond the grave. Because this hope has dawned upon him, and rises steadily on the broadening horizon of his thoughts, changing with its ethereal touch the whole pose and attitude of his spirit, his tone grows more calm and collected. The polemic fire dies out of him. He no longer deigns to answer the ill-grounded and inappropriate arguments which his Friends press upon him, but treats them with an irony through which there runs a strain of large-minded good humour and good sense. Incensed against them as he is, he admits that, from their point of view, what they say is true enough, and that in their place he might have said to them what they are saying to him (Chap. xvi. 1-6). Nor, though he still keenly resents their ungrounded assumption of his guilt, does he deny, he admits, that they are right in attributing his misery to the hand of God, and even proceeds to give a terrible description of the misery and shame heaped upon him by that unjust and yet most just and kindly Hand (Verses 7-17). For he is beginning to learn that

in the reproof of Chance
Lies the true proof of men ;

that God permits men to breast the strokes of Accident and the blows of Circumstance, that He compels them to engage in a great fight of Affliction, in order that they may get the victory over their bosom sins, their baser selves, and carry off as spoil a treasure that will enrich them for ever. He is beginning to learn that in the wind and tempest of Misfortune's frowns,

Distinction, with a broad and powerful fan,
Puffing at all, winnows the light away,
And what hath mass or matter, by itself
Lies rich in virtue and unmingled.

Nay, more; he is beginning to learn that he has to deal with *two* Gods,—the imaginary God of the current theology, who afflicts him because He hates him, and the real and only true God, who loves him while He afflicts him; the God who is witnessing to him in heaven even while He strives with him on earth, the God who stands surety for him with Himself and will yet vindicate him against Himself. To this God he turns, appealing from the injustice of men, appealing even against the apparent injustice of God Himself, assured that God *will* justify him, if not in this life, then in some life to come, a life which he must pass through death to inherit (Chap. xvi. 18–xvii. 16). In fine, he converts his very despair into the food of hope, and is in love with death, since, if not before, yet in death itself, in the dim Hadean kingdom from which no traveller has returned, he is sure that God will shew him a path of life.

CHAPTERS XVI. AND XVII.

CHAPTER XVI. 1.—*Then answered Job and said :*

2. *Many such things as these have I heard ;
 Miserable comforters are ye all !*
3. *Shall there be an end to windy words ?
 What goadeth thee, then, to answer thus ?*
4. *I too could speak as you
 Were your soul in my soul's stead ;
 I might string sentences against you,
 Or shake my head at you ;*
5. *I might strengthen you with my mouth,
 And soothe you with the comfort of my lips.*
6. *But now, though I speak, my grief is not assuaged ;
 And if I forbear, how am I eased ?*
7. *Truly, now, He hath worn me out.
 Thou hast made all my household desolate,*
- 8 *And Thou hast shrivelled me up ;
 My leanness hath become a witness and riseth up against me ;
 It accuseth me to my face.*
9. *He who hateth me rendeth me with his wrath,
 He gnasheth his teeth at me ;
 My Foe sharpeneth his eyes against me.*
10. *They open their mouths against me,*

- They smite me on the cheek reproachfully ;*
They conspire together against me.
 11. *God giveth me up to the ungodly,*
And flingeth me over into the hands of the wicked.
 12. *I was at ease, but He shattered me,*
He seized me by the throat and shook me.
 13. *He set me up to be his butt ;*
His archers beset me :
He cleaveth my side and spareth not,
He sheddeth my gall upon the ground ;
 14. *He breacheth me with breach on breach,*
He rusheth on me like a man of war.
 15. *I have sown sackcloth on my skin,*
And have thrust my horn into the dust ;
 16. *My face is inflamed with weeping,*
And mine eyelids darken under the shadow of death,
 17. *Although there is no violence in my hands,*
And my prayer is pure.
 18. *O Earth, cover not my blood,*
And let there be no resting-place for my cry !
 19. *Yet even now, behold, my Witness is in heaven,*
And He who testifieth to me on high !
 20. *My friends are my mockers ;*
But mine eye poureth out streams unto God,
 21. *That He would right a man against Himself,*
And a son of man against his fellow.
 22. *For a few years will soon pass,*
And I shall travel the road by which is no return.

CHAPTER XVII. 1.

- My breath is spent !*
My days are extinct !
For me the tomb !
 2. *Are there not mockers about me,*
And doth not mine eye lodge on their provocations ?
 3. *Put down pledges now !*
Be Thou Surety for me with Thyself :
Who else will strike hands for me ?
 4. *For Thou hast shut up their heart from understanding ;*
Therefore Thou wilt not exalt them.
 5. *Whoso betrayeth his friend to the spoiler,*
The eyes of his sons shall waste away.
 6. *He hath made me a byword to the people ;*
I am become one in whose face they spit :

7. *Mine eye is dim with grief,
And all my limbs are as a shadow.*
8. *At this the upright are astonished,
And the innocent bestirreth himself against the impious;*
9. *But the righteous shall hold on his way,
And he that hath pure hands shall wax stronger and stronger.*
10. *Return, now, all of you, and come on,
For I find not a sage among you.*
11. *My days are past ;
And my purposes are broken off,
Even my most cherished thoughts !*
12. *Yet would they turn night into day,
And bring light into the very face of darkness*
13. *If I hope, it is for Hades as my home,
And to make my bed in darkness.*
14. *I cry to corruption, " Thou art my father ! "*
" My mother ! " and " My sister ! " to the worm.
15. *Where now, therefore, is my hope ?
Yea, my hope,—who can see it ?*
16. *To the gates of Hades shall it go down,
And we shall rest together in the dust !*

Chapter xvi. Verse 2.—Job opens his reply with an allusion to the reproachful demand of Eliphaz in Chapter xv. 11 : "Are the consolations of God too small for thee, and the words that we gently speak?" The consolations they brought him, and professed to bring from God, *were* too small for him, much too small. He had heard many such wise saws as Eliphaz and Bildad had cited, heard them till he was sick of them. If they could offer him no better consolations than these, they were but "miserable comforters;" they did but aggravate instead of lighten the trouble of his spirit.

In *Verse 3* he retorts on Eliphaz his own sarcasm (comp. Chap xv. 2, 3), charging him with employing the very "words of wind" for stooping to which he had himself just been rebuked. And, at the same time, he demands why Eliphaz could not at least comply with his request (Chap. xiii. 5), and be of those

That therefore only are reputed wise—
For saying nothing.

What had he done to provoke this incessant stream of ancient saws, all intended to point a modern instance?

Verses 4 and 5.—Nevertheless, with that large fairmindedness on which I have remarked, Job admits, though still with some slight touches of sarcasm, that, in their place, he himself might have taken that very line of consolation which chafes him on the lips of his Friends. Had it been his part to console with them, he might have strung antique “sentences” together—the original phrase implying a certain artifice and insincerity in the process; he might have shaken his head at them in grave astonishment, or mild reproof, or scornful contempt (comp. Psalm xxii. 7; and St. Mark xv. 29): he might even have strengthened them only *with his mouth*, and soothed them only *with his lips*,—affecting, *i.e.*, to stay them with words that came only from the mouth, not from the heart; speaking only, as Carlyle puts it, “from the teeth outward.”

The finest commentary on this outburst of impatience under what is called “consolation,” of resentment against the endeavour to preach down the heart with a hoard of musty maxims and time-honoured platitudes (as also the best illustration of a similar outburst in Chapter xiii. 2–5), is to be found in a passage in “*Much Ado about Nothing*,” in which I cannot but think Shakespeare had Job and the Friends of Job in his thoughts, for it includes every point that we have noted, and more. When Leonato, maddened with grief and indignation for the death and dishonour of his daughter, is warned by his brother that, if he go on thus, he will kill himself, and is besought not “thus to second grief against himself,” he replies:—

I pray thee, *cease thy counsel*,
Which falls into mine ear as profitless
As water in a sieve: *give me not counsel*;
Nor let no comforter delight mine ear
But such an one whose wrongs do suit with mine.
Bring me a father that so loved his child,
Whose joy of her is overwhelm'd like mine,
And bid *him* speak of patience. . . .
If such an one will smile and stroke his beard,
Bid sorrow wag. . . .
Patch grief with proverbs; . . . bring him yet to me,
And I of him will gather patience.

But there is no such man : for, brother, *men*
Can counsel, and speak comfort to that grief
Which they themselves not feel ; but, tasting it,
Their counsel turns to passion, which before
Would give preceptial medicine to rage,
Fetter strong madness in a silken thread,
Charm ache with air, and agony with words :
No, no : 'tis all men's office to speak patience
To those that wring under the load of sorrow,
But no man's virtue nor sufficiency,
To be so moral when he shall endure
The like himself. Therefore give me no counsel :
My griefs cry louder than advertisement.

Verse 6.—“My griefs cry louder than advertisement” is the very thought in the mind of Job. So keen are they, so deeply have they cut into the very root and centre of his life, that he gains no relief by speaking of them ; no words can express a tithe of what he feels, or allay the emotion that swells within his heart and lifts it nearer Heaven. He craves to speak with God, and not to listen to men. For, on the other hand, even silence, which is the best medicine for some griefs, in no whit diminishes the clinging and growing pain which is eating into his very soul. “*If I forbear, what goes from me ?*”

This, with the brief ironical challenge contained in the tenth Verse of the next Chapter, is all the reply Job vouchsafes to the elaborate argument of Eliphaz. When Bildad had appealed to the voice and authority of Antiquity, Job had met the appeal with wise distinctions and weighty disproofs—met it, it would seem, once for all. For he now declines to reopen that point, to continue moving round and round in the narrow circle which hemmed in the thoughts of his Friends. A new and larger thought, a thought pregnant with a strange and well-nigh incredible hope, has dawned upon him,—the thought that the true God lies far behind and beyond such poor conceptions of Him as he had hitherto been able to frame ; and the hope that, if God should prove to be so much higher and greater than he had thought, then his Judge may be his Advocate after all and not his Adversary, his Friend and not his Enemy. Many Commentators have failed to see how this thought of hope pervades the

whole reply of Job, in part because Job's expression of it is chequered by so many shadows of doubt, broken by so many outcries of what seems despair; and in part because they do not realize that it is out of the depths of a divine despair that most of our truest presentiments, our most sustaining hopes, arise upon us. They forget that we cannot expect from a man in Job's miserable condition that he should wholly forget his misery because a new and hopeful conviction has begun to form itself in his mind, or that he should state it as firmly and brightly as though he were at ease. And they forget how commonly hope is a recoil, a reaction, from despair. We have only to put ourselves in Job's place, to sound the depths of his despair, to consider how *we* should have expressed any great hope which relieved it, in order both to see how natural it was that, if he was not to sink into the abyss of utter disbelief, this hope should have come to him, and to understand his chequered and fitful exposition of it. If we bring this sympathetic spirit to the Verses which follow, we shall not be perplexed by the fluctuations of mood and tone betrayed in them; we shall feel that, through all these fluctuations, Job holds fast to his new and great hope.

Verses 7 and 8.—He begins sadly enough, dwelling on the poignant details of his loneliness and misery, ascribing them to the hand of God, and admitting that they lend some support to the imputation cast upon him by his Friends. He admits and complains,—God has worn me out, reft from me all that I most valued,

sequestering from me all
That time, acquaintance, custom, and condition
Made tame and most familiar to my nature;

and even the very health and vigour he needed in order to sustain a loss so ruinous and complete. Nay, more; the very evil which Eliphaz had represented to be the punishment proper and peculiar to the wicked (Chap. xv. 34) has fallen upon him,—*his household is left unto him desolate*; his kinsfolk and neighbours have abandoned him, and even his most intimate and trusted friends “lay” but “negligent and loose

regards upon him ; ” so that, turn where he will, no eye pities him, no word of solace greets his ear. He is utterly isolated and alone, shut up to himself. And, worse still, even he himself is turning traitor to himself ; his diseased and emaciated body bears witness against him, confessing, as it were, that he is and must be a sinner, although his conscience acquits him of any wilful and deliberate sin :—

Nay, if I turn mine eyes upon myself,
I find myself a traitor with the rest.

And all this—his loneliness, the defection of kinsfolk and friends, the miserable self-contradictions in which he is involved—he owes to God : it is God who has done it all. So far from denying that his sorrows come from above, and bear witness against him, he insists on it ; and the only question is whether, with himself, his friends, and God, against him, and only his good conscience on his side, he can still hold fast his integrity.

In Verses 9–16 he gives a still more appalling description of the Divine enmity against him, and of its terrible and far-spreading results. The figure of *Verses* 9–11 is that of some poor frail timid creature pursued by wild beasts, one of them powerful and dreadful beyond all telling, who is followed by a pack of inferior and ignoble attendants, to whom the prey, when caught, is contemptuously flung over. God Himself is the lion ; and not the Friends only, who have shewn themselves the sycophants of God, but all who hated Job and derided him—of whom there were many (Chap. xxx. 1–15)—are the jackals in full cry behind Him ; while Job is the victim to be run down and thrown to the yelping pack. *Verse* 9 describes the terrible onset of the furious leader—his rending anger, and gnashing teeth, and flaming eyes ; *Verse* 10, the pack, “the pell-mell rout of petty curs,” that barked and howled behind Him, with their gaping jaws, their shameless gestures, and the hungry hate which inspired and united them ; and *Verse* 11, God’s scornful abandonment of the stunned and bleeding prey to his hungry train. There is an inevitable touch of bitterness and contempt in these Verses. It was impossible that Job should not be cut to the very quick

as he saw the Friends he had trusted, and the clan of which he had been the honoured Chieftain, turn virulently against him.

What the declined is,
He shall as soon read in the eyes of others
As feel in his own fall.

Job had declined—fallen from the top of happy days to the very bottom of loss and misery; but it gave a new and keener edge to his misery that he should read the evidence of his decline in the averted or scornful eyes of men on whom he had relied for sympathy and help.

In Verses 9–11, though God is the chief Foe, yet the description of the human pack at his heels is so graphic as to draw our attention from Him to them. But in Verses 12–16 Job calls our thoughts away from men to God, his chief Antagonist, setting forth the Divine enmity against him in figures which successively indicate its unexpectedness, its violence, and its destructiveness.

In *Verse* 12 he describes it under the figure of a man of gigantic thews and irresistible strength, who suddenly seizes on one who sits in unsuspecting ease, shakes him in his terrible hands, and dashes him on the ground. In *Verse* 13 the figure changes, and the shattered victim of the previous verse is set up as a target; the arrows of God hiss round him; they pierce his side, cleave the gall-bladder and its ducts, so that its contents flow out upon the ground,—this shedding of the gall not being, however, a fact of science, but an image in common use by the Arab poets. Again the figure changes in *Verse* 14, and Job compares himself to “some fair edifice,” or rather, perhaps, to some brave fort, which God has assailed and breached again and again, till it has tumbled in ruins to the ground. The suddenness, the fatal force and sweep, the planned and deliberate violence of that storm of change and calamity which had swept away all that Job held dear is graphically portrayed in these picturesque Verses.

And in *Verses* 15 and 16 he tells us, in plain sad prose for the most part, what the results of God’s unaccountable and inappeasable enmity against him had been, to what sordid

and degrading conditions it has reduced him. He has put on the sackcloth of the mourner—mourning for himself, since none will mourn for or with him; nay, he has *sewn* sackcloth on to his skin, not simply assuming it as an ordinary badge of mourning, but clinging to these trappings and suits of woe, making them as it were part of his very self, because, like Hamlet, he has “that within which passeth show,” a settled and rooted melancholy, which the ordinary “forms, moods, and shapes of grief” cannot adequately denote.

His grief lies all within ;
And these external manners of laments
Are merely shadows to the unseen grief
That swells with silence in the tortured soul :
There lies the substance.

And he has “fouled his horn in the dust;” *i.e.*, his once high and honoured head has been brought low with shame: his face is “inflamed” with the hot ferment of his grief and indignation; and the very “shadow of death darkens on his eyelids.”

All things and all persons are against him then,—his household, his clan, his very slaves and dependents, his God, and, in part, himself. Can he, can any man, stand against these and against the evidence of guilt with which this universal antagonism is fraught? Will he, in the face of all these, still maintain his integrity? Yes, of even *this* he is capable; and it sends a thrill of pride to one’s very heart to see that any human soul can rise to so heroic a strain. “All this has come upon me, and come upon me by the will of God,” he says in *Verse 17*; “but still I stand to it that I have not deserved it, that there has been no violence in my hands, and that my worship has been sincere.” He claims for himself what the prophet Isaiah (Chap. liii. 9) claims for the suffering Messiah, that he is being driven down to death, *although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth*. In the great and weighty line of our greatest poet, he still asserts,

Mine honour keeps the weather of my fate.

Let his “fate” be never so disastrous, he will not, that he may

escape it, sacrifice his "honour;" he will maintain his integrity to the last.

But this is Job's familiar attitude and contention. Where is the *new* tone, the new thought, the new hope? It breaks upon us in *Verses* 18-22; and the overmastering grief occasioned by his loss and shame, by the aversion of God and man, are the pangs of which it is born. For one who conceives himself abandoned both by God and man, if he is not to sink into a bottomless despair, if any remnant of faith and courage be left him, *must* struggle upward to a Love and a Justice higher than he has hitherto known: that is to say, he must reach up to a God other and higher than he has yet conceived. It is God who is the author of all Job's woes,—God who has taken from him all that He once gave, stripped him of health and wealth, alienated even his closest friends from him, stretched him on the *mezbele*, put him under a ban, made him the mark of a thousand scornful and sarcastic eyes, with none so poor to do him reverence, none so pitiful to do him kindness. Whither can Job turn from *Him*? If he is to turn anywhere, he can only turn from the hostile God whom he knows only too well, to the loving God whose ways are so large and wise as to be inscrutable to him. In plain words, there is nothing for him but to turn from the imaginary to the real God, from the God of the current theology to the God of the conscience and the heart. The philosophers, as Schlottmann here reminds us, used to say, *Nemo contra Deum, nisi Deus ipse*; and Job feels that he has reached an extremity in which *he must enlist God Himself against God*. To Him, therefore, he now and henceforth makes his appeal.

Verse 18.—This appeal begins even in the sublime invocation,

O Earth cover not my blood,
And let there be no resting-place for my cry!

with which we may compare the challenge of Queen Constance,

Arm, arm, you heavens, against these perjured kings!

The invocation is based on the ancient traditional belief that

the earth refuses to drink in the blood of the innocent, that it lies like a ghastly stain on its breast, for ever crying for vengeance. But *to whom* does the blood of the innocent cry out, *if not to God?* It is God, therefore, whom Job invokes even when he appeals to the Earth. And yet it is God who has hunted him down, who is shedding his blood! It is *to God against God*, therefore, that Job appeals. With the strange boldness born of blended faith and despair, he believes that God will avenge the very blood which God Himself has shed! He may seem to be a Foe who thirsts for his destruction; but, nevertheless, He must be a Friend who will save and vindicate him; who, somehow, at some time, will confess, and even cause men to confess, that the blood of Job, like that of Abel, is that of an innocent and righteous man.

This amazing thought of a twofold God, or, rather, this convulsive clutching at the real God who is so unlike all that Job had conceived Him to be, is developed in the Verses which follow.

Hitherto the thought of his unrecognized and unavailing innocence had driven Job well-nigh frantic; at this point he had always heretofore lost his self-command, and broken out into wild and barren reproaches against the Judge who was handling him so unjustly. But now it leads him to divine that, behind the God whose face is clouded with anger, there must be a God whose aspect is bright and propitious; that he need not appeal to men against God, but may press straight on to God Himself; that he need not tax himself to look forward to some day far distant in the future in which his integrity will be acknowledged, since even now, as he lies stripped and abandoned on the earth, God recognizes his innocence and is testifying to it on high. This is the thought, the hope, which gives so profound an interest to *Verse 19*. And this thought—so strange, so welcome, to Job—was, as we know, accurately true, although it was but a piercing prevision of faith. God *was* witnessing to him on high, calling on the heavenly host, and even on the Slanderer and Accuser who appeared among the sons of God, to confess that “there was none like him on the earth, a perfect man and an upright, one that feareth God and escheweth evil.”

This, I repeat, was the new wonderful thought which rose like a star on Job's horizon—the thought of a just God and a Saviour, who is often concealed from men by the God whom they receive by tradition or infer from nature and from human life; a God who knows the innocence of the just even now already, and will one day make it manifest, though He appears *not* to know it for the present, and for the present does not vindicate it. So clear and true is it to him even already, that in *Verse 20*, instead of appealing as heretofore from God to men, he appeals from men to the God he has just discovered. *They* mock him with false assumptions of guilt, false interpretations of the Divine rule and providence, with invitations to begin a true life by making a false confession of uncommitted sins, and with false menaces of an anger God does not feel, of a judgment which He will never execute. And, therefore, he turns from *them* to *Him*, and appeals to Him with streaming tears, which testify at once to his misery and to his sincerity.

And *for what* does he appeal? The verse which answers that question—*Verse 21*—is one of the boldest words in Scripture. For what Job demands and entreats is, first and chiefly, that God will justify him, Job, against God Himself; and, secondly and subordinately, that God will justify him against the suspicions and misconstructions of his fellows. The sublime audacity of faith can go no further. That a man in conditions so utterly sordid and miserable, so thick with incentives to despair—abandoned, put to the ban, derided alike by Heaven and earth—should still trust in God at all, is a wonder that might well make us proud of the nature we share with him; but that he should so conceive of God, and should so invincibly trust in Him, as to believe that, in his justice, God will listen and respond to an appeal *against* his justice, is a wonder “past all expressing,” a wonder which alone explains how God should be so proud of a good man as to challenge for him the admiration of all the host of heaven.

With the unconscious art of profound emotion Job proceeds, in *Verse 22*, to wring from his very misery a plea why God should not long delay his vindication of him. Frail by nature, exhausted by his long agony, he must soon pass the

bourn from which no traveller returns; and because the time is short, he presses for despatch.

Chapter xvii. Verse 1.—This plea is elaborated, it is rendered still more impressive and pathetic, in the three sighs which compose this Verse. And in *Verse 2* it is strengthened and reinforced by a new plea. Forgetting that

We may not think the justness of each act
Such and no other than event doth form it,

the Friends have judged him solely by the events and issues of his course, squaring their guess with the mere shows of his life. And their pertinacious assumption of his guilt is a perpetual provocation to him, a constant and growing temptation to distrust and despair. His life is at the last gasp, the tomb is gaping for him, and yet they mock him with the hope of a long and honourable life, if he will but repent a sin he has never committed! They fret and irritate his spirit by asserting that he *has* committed it. He cannot simply glance at their provocations and pass on his way; his eye is compelled to “lodge” or “dwell” upon them: for are they not for ever repeating them? Will not God make haste to deliver him, then,—all the more haste because of this standing temptation, this galling addition to his misery?

In *Verse 3*, as he broods over this sickening addition to a misery already insupportable, his new thought, his new hope, flashes out once more, though now in a new form. He is assured, as he has already told us, that God is his Witness, that God acknowledges his innocence and will one day vindicate it. But that day seems far off; his life meantime is hastening to a close; the Friends chafe him with their iterated suspicions of his guilt, and are even ready to triumph over him. Will not God, then, vouchsafe him some immediate and visible *pledge* of that future vindication? The Judge who chastens and afflicts him has already become his Witness: will not the Witness also become his Surety, and “strike hands” for him?—to strike hands being an ancient and customary mode of giving bail, of becoming surety for one who was contracting a loan or was suspected of a crime. It is for this

open and instant pledge of his ultimate acquittal that he now importunes the Almighty.

And from *Verse 4* we learn he is persuaded that even *this* will be granted him. He is sure that, since his Friends are so lacking in understanding as to condemn him for guilty when he can summon God Himself to attest his innocence, and even to see in that appeal only a new evidence of his guilt, God will not exalt them, will not give them the triumph they anticipate, by proving them to be in the right, or even by long allowing them to think themselves in the right.

Verse 5.—Nor will God only foil them of their expected triumph; He will also punish them, if not in their own persons, yet in the persons of their children, for expecting and desiring it. Unjust to the affection they owe their Friend, they shall be wounded through their affections. They have shewn him no mercy, treating him like mere spoil and booty; and therefore God, who to the unmerciful shews Himself unmerciful, will surely requite them for their sin.

Verse 6.—Not to them alone, but to all who think with them, *i.e.*, to his whole generation, God has made him a proverb and an object of contempt. And (*Verse 7*) under this contempt, and the judgment which caused it, he has wasted to a mere shadow. There is, therefore, the more need why God should interpose, and interpose promptly. For (*Verse 8*) by the spectacle which he presents moral distinctions were becoming confused, the unrighteous were growing bold and insolent in their opposition to Heaven, and the good, astonished at the contempt showered on a man so good, were burning with indignation against those who oppressed him. And he is assured that God *will* interpose, interpose *soon*, with some guarantee of his favour, though He may still postpone that complete vindication of Job's integrity which shall abash the wicked. For in the righteous and purehanded of *Verse 9*, though he does not exclude others, he refers principally to himself. *They*, no doubt, will be strengthened and assured; but it is mainly *he* who is to hold on his way, and to wax stronger and stronger.

And thus two wonderful summits of light and clearness are conquered by the afflicted Patriarch. He has learned to

believe in God, and he has learned to believe in himself as the child of God. He has learned to trust in the absolute justness of the ways of God with men, although those ways are often obscure and threatening; and he has also learned to trust that somehow, though he knows not how, and at some time, though he knows not when, God will justify him; that even to him good will be the final goal of ill.

Verse 10.—As the Friends are now full in the thought of Job, it is not unnatural, perhaps, that he should break out into this brief cartel of defiance. It may be that it is prompted by the very conviction he has just grasped of his ultimate and assured triumph over them. He challenges them afresh, challenges them contemptuously, because, knowing what the issue of the conflict must be, he no longer fears what they can do, or say, against him.

But this challenge is a digression. The main argument is resumed in Verses 11–16, verses which seem to breathe an atmosphere of despair as deadly as any we have thus far encountered. And yet, for all so sad as they sound, we utterly misconstrue them if we take sadness to be their fundamental tone. They really indicate the stirrings and flutterings, if not the advance, of Job's new hope. He has persuaded himself that even now already God recognizes his innocence, and that some day He will vindicate it. He has also persuaded himself that God is about to give him some manifest pledge of his favour, and that right early. And now he longs to define and fix his hope; not to leave it floating unattached through the broad spaces of time, but to determine its orbit, and the moment at which it will sail into sight. Some day, somewhere, somehow, God will appear for him! Yes, but how, and where, and when? *Will the moment of death be the moment of vindication and Sheol its scene?* Is the grave the gate and avenue by which he must pass to life and immortal honour?

These, I take it, are the thoughts which Job is now striving to express. But whatever the construction we put on these Verses, we must at least recognize in them a strain of faith amazingly noble and high. For if they mean no more, they can mean no less than this: that, even if no deliverance,

and no sign of deliverance, should come to him in life, he will carry his hope with him down into the darkness of death, finding not a path only, but *a home*, in Hades; and, for the brief space which yet remains to him before he goes down to the gates of Hades, he will be content with the assurance that God already knows his innocence and will hereafter prove it.

In *Verse 11*, as in *Verse 1*, we hear a cry “out of the depths.” Not only has Job lost all of outward good he once possessed, not only is his life hastening to its close, but he has also lost those inward treasures which were the true power and joy of his life: his best purposes, his most cherished thoughts and schemes and aims—or, in the fine phrase of the Original, “the possessions of his heart”—are broken in sunder by the stroke which has fallen on him.

Verse 12 presents some difficulty. The most natural, as also the most beautiful and suggestive, reading of it is that which finds the antecedent in the previous Verse, and makes Job lament the loss of the thoughts and purposes he had cherished in his inmost heart because, had these been spared to him, *they* would have turned the night of his sorrow into a joyful day, and brought light into the very face of darkness. But this reading seems to be forbidden by the Hebrew. Our only alternative, therefore, is to fall back on a much tamer construction, and to understand an allusion to “the consolations” of his Friends; to take him as meaning that by their false promises and invitations they were trying to beguile him, to represent his night as a day, or as about to become a day, and pretending to see an impossible light of hope in the darkness which enveloped him.

Verses 13–16.—From this delusive light of hope he recoils on the new hope which God Himself has kindled in his heart, the hope of a future vindication and deliverance. When, or how, it is to be fulfilled, he cannot tell. But probably it will not be in this world. If not, he is content to wait, to carry his hope with him into the grave. He is even familiarizing himself with the grave already, looking to it as his home and bed of rest, saluting corruption and the worm as near of kin to him, as his probable deliverers therefore. *They* would set

his spirit free to descend into Hades; and in Hades might he not find a justice denied to him here, and see the hope which was as yet invisible? In any case he will at least find rest from the fret and turmoil of a hungry and divided heart; after life's fitful fever sleeping well.

Canon Cook gives a fine rendering of *Verse 16*, which I should like to adopt. He translates it thus: "*Will the bars of Hades fall? And will there altogether be rest in the grave?*" But this, I think, is a stronger expression of Job's surmise that rest and deliverance await him in the world to come than his words will yet bear. All we can be sure of is that his thoughts were tending in that direction; and that, if it were God's will, he was content to wait till he descended into Hades for that vindication of his integrity for which he nevertheless so passionately longed.

As we look back over the whole of this Reply we must admit, I think, that it marks a great advance. The drama is evidently moving on toward its catastrophe. Job has grasped truths of which he can never henceforth wholly lose hold, truths which are likely to lead him on to conclusions still wider and more definite than any he has yet reached.

'Tis a strange experience through which we have seen him pass, and yet not an experience wholly strange to the more thoughtful spirits of our own time. And if I have a little lingered over it and insisted on it, it is because, in all probability, many of us have passed through a similar experience. The traditional and theologic God of our earlier years has long since grown incredible to us. We could not believe in the hard and austere Master, the angry and pre-scientific God, whom our fathers worshipped. We have had to grope, often in great doubt and misery, after some higher and more satisfying conception of the Divine Ruler of men. Happy are we if, from the abyss of doubt or from the depths of some divine despair, we, like Job, have seen and climbed the altar-stairs which slope through darkness up to the only wise and true God, our Father and Witness, our Surety and Friend.

3. BILDAD TO JOB.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I HAVE already described Bildad¹ as a man of less originality and more "temper" than Eliphaz. "A much lesser man every way, with a much more contracted range of thought and sympathy, he deals in proverbs and citations, and takes a severer and more personal tone." That description of him is fully borne out, as indeed it was in part suggested by, the Speech he now delivers. Throughout it he does but copy and reproduce, in colours still more glowing and austere, the terrible and impressive picture of the wicked man and his doom which Eliphaz had drawn in Chapter xv. Like Eliphaz, he depicts the sinner as wandering for his brief day amid snares, haunted by the terrors of an evil conscience, and then sinking into a premature and dishonourable tomb. Not only does he take his *motif* from Eliphaz; he imitates his very manner, reproduces some of his very touches. If Eliphaz condemns the sinner for dwelling in houses "ordained to be ruins," doomed to desolation by the curse of God, Bildad describes his home as under the selfsame doom (Verses 14 and 15), as consumed by "brimstone," like the cities of the Plain. If Eliphaz gives us a long chain of citations from the Arab "fathers," Bildad repairs for wisdom and authority to the selfsame source—this brief Chapter containing at least a dozen allusions² to the gathered and priceless wisdom of the Arabian sages. When he quits this ancient and moss-grown fountain, his habit of citation still clings to him, and he quotes three or four sentences from Job himself, wresting them to his own purpose as he quotes them, and once at least he snatches a few words that will serve his turn from Eliphaz. Nay, so profoundly is his mind imbued with this proverbial lore, so deeply is it tintured with the element it has long wrought in, that even when he is most himself his own style is polished, sententious, concise—the true *chokmah* style; so that he makes proverbs when he cites none.

¹ See page 55.

² See Commentary on Verses 4, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 15, 17, 20.

And as for his severity, if Zophar is now and then more blunt and passionate, there is nothing in the whole Poem more severe than Bildad's veiled allusions to Job's character and condition. They are the more severe because of the art which veils them under "a rich drapery of diversified figures," which lingers over them to polish and elaborate and give them a keener edge. That some of the strokes in his portrait of the wicked man *are* taken from the person and history of Job is beyond doubt. What, for instance, can "that first-born of death" (Verses 13, 14), who is to hand him over to "the king of terrors," be but that most cruel and fatal of diseases, the *elephantiasis*, by which the limbs of Job's body were being devoured? And how can we fail to see in the "brimstone" of Verse 15 an allusion to the fire which, falling from heaven, had burned up the flocks of Job and the young men who kept them? Who is the tree of Verse 16, if not Job, whose branches, the children now lost to him, had already been lopped off, and whose root, his own wasted existence, was even now being dried up? And, again, who is he whose wealth, offspring, name, and memory are to be destroyed from the face of the earth as a warning to posterity (Verses 17-20), if not still Job, on whom that dreadful doom had already in great part fallen? Under his dismal and forbidding picture, as if his meaning were not plain enough already, Bildad writes, "This is the doom of him that knoweth not God,"—implying that now and henceforth he regards Job as one to whom the Almighty was unknown.

We have, it is true, to elicit these allusions; but, when once they have been pointed out, no one fails to recognize them, or doubts that Bildad is "confronting" Job "with self-comparisons." And when we remember that Job was the *friend* of Bildad, when we recall the horrible pain and shame and misery with which he was overwhelmed, we cannot but say of one who could look on his agony with "no compunctious visitings of nature," who could assail him in his utmost misery with reproach on reproach, and who could even pause to point and polish and barb his reproaches, that they might inflict a sharper and more dangerous wound, that, like Macbeth, "*he wants the natural touch*;" for, obviously, he loves his wit and his proverbs more than his friend.

I have said¹ that in this Second Colloquy all the Friends are harder and more bitter than in the First; and that is quite as true of Bildad as it is of Eliphaz, as we may see by comparing this Speech with his previous one. In Chapter viii., as in this Chapter, he begins by complaining of the length and wildness of Job's utterances, as was not unnatural perhaps in a man who was himself studious of brevity and a sententious neatness. In *that* he paints the character and fate of the wicked in the most approved colours of Egyptian antiquity, as in *this* he paints them in colours drawn from Arabian antiquity. But there the resemblance ends. For his first speech is full of relenting, full of pressing invitations to Job to repent, full of assurances that God would yet be his Friend and Deliverer; and it closes with the cheerful and kindly affirmation that, because God would not "spurn the perfect, nor take evildoers by the hand," Job's mouth should yet be filled with laughter and his lips with song, while his enemies, clothed with shame, should utterly perish from the earth. But, now, instead of setting forth the justice of God, he simply threatens Job with his vengeance; instead of inviting him to repentance and amendment, he offers him no prospect of escape; instead of assuming that Job is "among the perfect," he denounces him as one who knows not God, and whom God and man will combine to "hunt out of the world." In fine, he here predicts for Job himself the very doom and end which in his first speech he had assigned to the enemies of Job.

There are two other, but minor, peculiarities in Bildad's carefully composed oration which need to be indicated. We might almost call it "the *Net* speech," in order to distinguish it from others; for in Verses 7-10 we have one of those simple feats of skill of which I have already pointed out several—simple to us, and yet so wonderful and delightful to men to whom the literary art is comparatively new. There is probably an allusion to "nets" and "toils," and kindred methods of snaring game, in the very first words Bildad utters. But in *these* Verses the Poet brings together all, or nearly all, the Hebrew names for the various kinds of nets and traps, just as in Chapter iv. Verses 10, 11, he collects all

¹ See pages 181, 182.

the Hebrew names for the lion, just as in Chapter x. Verses 21, 22, he collects most of the Hebrew words for darkness, within the narrow compass of a single sentence.

The other peculiarity in this Speech is that, though Bildad is addressing Job only, he addresses him in the plural, not in the singular, opening even with the question, "How long will *you* hunt for words?" not, "How long wilt *thou*?" And this is a peculiarity which has given rise to much discussion, and to some differences of opinion. The real motive for it I take to be that Bildad is here sarcastically replying to a sarcasm of Job's, and rebutting a claim which Job had advanced by ironically admitting it. Job had gibed (Chap. xii. 2) at the pretension of the Friends to speak in the name of the human race, and as though they held a monopoly of wisdom. He had also identified himself (Chap. xvii. 8, 9) with the upright and pure-handed throughout all the world. Bildad had taken both the gibe and the claim amiss; and therefore he now uses the plural instead of the singular, *as though he were addressing in Job the whole body with whom Job had identified himself, and to rebuke him for having puffed himself up until he had mistaken himself for the whole company of the righteous.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

- 1.—*Then answered Bildad the Shuchite and said :*
2. *How long will you hunt for words ?*
 Consider, and afterward let us speak.
3. *Wherefore are we accounted as the brute,*
 And held insensate in your eyes ?
4. *O thou that rendest thyself in thine anger,*
 Must the earth for thy sake be desolated,
 And the rock be removed out of its place ?
5. *Nevertheless, the lamp of the wicked shall be put out,*
 And the flame of his fire shall not shine ;
6. *The light shall darken in his tent,*
 And the lamp that is over him shall be put out ;
7. *The strides of his strength shall be straightened,*
 And his own counsel shall cast him down ;
8. *For his own feet shall thrust him into a net,*
 And he shall walk of himself into the toils ;
9. *A trap shall catch him by the heel,*
 And a noose shall hold him fast ;

10. *Its cord is hidden in the ground,*
 And its mesh on the path :
11. *Terrors shall affright him on every side,*
 They shall dog his footsteps ;
12. *His strength shall be hunger-bitten,*
 And destruction lie in wait at his side ;
13. *The first-born of death shall devour the bars of his skin,*
 The limbs of his body shall it devour ;
14. *He shall be torn from the shelter of his tent,*
 And be led away to the king of terrors ;
15. *They shall tenant the tent no longer his ;*
 Brimstone shall be sprinkled on his homestead :
16. *His roots beneath shall be dried up,*
 And his branch be lopped off above ;
17. *All memory of him shall perish from the land,*
 And he shall have no name in the street ;
18. *He shall be thrust from light into darkness,*
 And hunted out of the world ;
19. *He shall have neither offshoot nor offspring among his people,*
 Nor any survivor in the place where he sojourned ;
20. *Posterity shall be astonished at his day,*
 As they that went before were amazed.
21. *Such are the dwellings of the wicked,*
 And this the doom of him that knew not God.

Verses 2 and 3.—Job had commenced his reply to Eliphaz (Chap. xvi. 3) by impatiently demanding, “Shall there never be an end to windy words?” and now Bildad retorts upon him, “How long will *you* hunt for words?” and bids him consider,

And let your reason with your choler question
What 'tis you go about.

What it is that Job goes about, or intends, in so far as the Friends are concerned, is quite plain to Bildad. In his intemperance, his arrogant assumption of superiority, he would fain reduce them to the level of mere dumb cattle without discourse of reason. And so Bildad virtually exclaims and advises:—

What, are you chafed ?
Ask God for temperance ; that's the appliance only
Which your disease requires.

Some allowance must be made for the irritation with which Bildad rebukes the irritation of Job. It must be admitted that, though not without reason as well as provocation, Job had said much which it was hard for the Friends to bear. "Miserable comforters!" he had called them (Chap. xvi. 2). God, he complained (Chap. xvi. 11), not without at least an oblique thrust at them, had "flung him over into the hands of the wicked;" He had "shut their heart against understanding" (Chap. xvii. 4), so that it was impossible to "find a wise man among them" (Chap. xvii. 10). "With himself at war," he had forgotten "the shows of love to other men." But, none the less, all this must have been very hard for the Friends to bear, especially hard perhaps for Bildad, who piqued himself on his wisdom, who was very conscious that he had the most venerable authorities on his side, and was firmly convinced that it was Job, and not he himself, who was devoid of understanding. Evidently, the sarcasms of Job rankled in his spirit, and he was bent on punishing him for them,—as, indeed, he begins to do already by charging him with *hunting* after mere words, or with weaving tangled and interminable *nets of words*: accusing him, that is, of attempting to entrap his Friends and blind them to his guilt by the subtle and insincere phrases which he spun together in his defence, and spun out till all the world was weary of them. This is the best, as it is the only, excuse we can make for the fierce but controlled passion which set Bildad brooding over his retort, and carefully shaping and pointing the cruel and sarcastic allusions with which it was barbed.

Verse 4.—Job was much more like a wild beast than they were; for though he had charged God with tearing and rending him (Chap. xvi. 9), it was he himself who was rending himself in pieces by his passionate struggles against his fate. But, let him struggle as he would, though he might and must injure himself, for

Those wounds heal ill that men do give themselves,

yet what could he hope to do against God? Was the earth to be desolated, and the rock removed, for his sake? The desolation of the earth is a figure for the withdrawal of law

and order from the world, and the removal of the firm massive rock, for the overthrow of the fixed eternal methods of the Divine Government and justice. And this *παράβολή* is closely akin to such Arabian proverbs as these: "The world will not come to an end for his sake," and "The world does not exist for one man." The question really means, in general, Can you hope by any violence, by the most passionate struggles and appeals, to break away from the law and order of the universe, to disturb the natural course and even flow of the Divine Providence, and compel it to your mind? No doubt, the law which Bildad had specially in view was the law of retribution, and the particular scope and intent of his demand was: Are you, Job, being guilty, to be treated as though you were innocent? Must God, to meet your caprice, repeal the very law of his providence, and turn back, or cleave in sunder, the natural sequences of cause and effect?

In *Verses 5 and 6* Bildad answers his own question by asserting the invariability of that Law. *Nevertheless*—in spite of all your doubts and struggles and outcries—it remains and must for ever remain true that the lamp of the wicked is put out, and the fire on his hearth expires. Both these figures are common in the most ancient poetry of the Arabs—even to this day, indeed, an afflicted Arab will say, "Fate has put out my lamp"—and were probably drawn from that source. There is a touch of pathos in these homely images, the bright household lamp going out and the cheerful fire wasting till the hearth is cold, which we find nowhere else throughout this speech. And the pathos deepens as we remember that the dying lamp and the waning fire are but symbols of the sinner's fate, of his destruction. The unwonted touch of pathos in the figures, no less than the figures themselves, can hardly fail to remind us of that wonderful line in *Othello*, where the Moor, when about to slay the sleeping Desdemona, extinguishes the taper that burns at her side, saying,—

Put out the light, and then—*put out the light* :

first, put out the light of the taper, and, then, put out the light of life.

Verse 7 contains yet another Arab touch. The metaphor

of the clause, "The strides of his strength," or, his mighty strides, "are straightened," is to be found in the Arabian proverb, "If a man keep not within the limits of his powers, his wide steps shall be straightened." Translated into plain prose, the meaning of the metaphor is that, whereas the sinner, in the brief hour of his prosperity, moves with freedom and confidence, framing large schemes, attacking vast enterprises, with the assurance of a man confident of success because he has often, as it were, covered broad spaces with a single stride; yet no sooner does trouble come upon him, no sooner does he fail to reach his ends, no sooner do men confront and thwart him, than his insolent self-assurance forsakes him, and he creeps on his way with timid and embarrassed feet, uncertain of himself, a traitor to his own hopes.

But by far the more weighty thought of this Verse is contained in the second clause, which declares that it is his own "counsel," *i.e.* his own *character*, which unmans and ruins him, his own conscience which makes a coward of him. He fails and perishes, not because any judgment is arbitrarily tacked on to his sin; the judgment is the natural and inevitable consequence of his sin, the fair and proper issue of the course he has chosen for himself. It is not for him to upbraid high Heaven, but to censure and condemn himself for being what he has made himself. It is by his bold and wilful transgression of the plain laws by which human life is ruled that he is "cast down."

And this weighty thought is elaborated with unusual care in Verses 8-11, in which, as I have said, most of the Hebrew words for "nets" and "snares" are crowded into a narrow space. By his own confident and careless transgression of Divine laws the sinner has fallen into a path thick with traps, some hidden in the ground, some lying on its very surface; and, being in, he pushes on till some of them seize him in a fierce and desperate clutch. In plain words, while the righteous man, walking by rule and law, may walk in light and safety even in this dim world, the world is so formed, and the relationships of human life and society are so constituted, as to be full of temptation, and therefore full of danger, to the self-reliant transgressor who, heedless of those laws, walks at

his own will. To him temptations present themselves at every turn. Where the righteous find only incentives to duty, or a summons to self-discipline, *he* finds incentives to violations of duty and an opportunity of self-indulgence. Such men often blame their circumstances, their conditions, or some power of evil external to themselves; but it is they themselves who are to blame. It is *their own* counsel which casts them down, *their own* feet that thrust them into the net; they walk *of themselves* into the toils. They need no devil to tempt them; for

we are devils to ourselves
When we *will* tempt the frailty of our powers,
Presuming on their changeful potency.

A lawless self-love and self-confidence are a sufficient cause of ruin; and where these are present we need seek no other.

Verse 11.—For a time a man may walk on his self-chosen and lawless path unconscious of the perils he affronts; but at last there comes an hour when he awakes to his true condition, when “the multiplying villanies of” his “nature do swarm upon him,” and he sees the dark array of terrors and retributions closing in upon him from every side and dogging his every step. The evil he has done cannot be recalled; and now its consequences must be met—consequences which often look even more terrible than they are. The thoughtless security, the careless self-confidence with which men do evil, and the horrible and paralyzing dread which falls on them when they find themselves compassed about with the results of the evil they have done, and the torture they suffer from “thick-coming fancies which will not let them rest,” are very finely and solemnly depicted in Bildad’s oration. As we read it we can see the sinner, who once strode along “the primrose path” with so bold and defiant an air, now that he has been revealed to himself, creeping along through dark and pathless shades strewn with traps and snares, starting at the fall of every leaf, peopling the darkness with spectres, often pausing to listen, and crouching down in the vain hope of escaping the

visible and invisible perils to which he is exposed. At last he knows himself as he is.

Who then shall blame
His pester'd senses to recoil and start,
*When all that is within him does condemn
Itself for being there?*

The final line of this Verse is strikingly and pathetically picturesque—"Terrors shall dog his footsteps;" or, more literally perhaps, "*they shall startle him to his feet*"—and shews us the poor hunted creature, beside himself with fear, aroused to further efforts at impossible escape, either when he crouches down to evade the pursuit of his haunting terrors, or when, worn out and exhausted, he lies down to snatch a brief and troubled repose.

Verse 12.—Exhausted by hunger, he slowly creeps on his way, the dark spectre of destruction moving with him, and ever quickening new terrors within him. This description of the overwhelming effect of terror is essentially Arabic. Men *have* died of fright even in England, I suppose; but it is a curious psychological fact that the Arabs, who are as brave as Englishmen, are *often* unmanned by it, insomuch that they refuse to stir a finger in self-defence, though, if they would but rouse themselves, they might easily surmount the danger which threatens them. As Bildad had a name for this fatal disorder (*ra'b*), so have they (*wahm*). And if they are seized by this *wahm*, *i.e.*, if the idea of some imminent and inevitable danger, or misfortune, once enters their minds, they utterly break down, and often expire before the blow falls. Consul Wetzstein assures us that he has himself seen men die of it.

Verse 13.—From this point onward Bildad grows more sharp and personal in his tone. Though his description is still couched in general terms, he takes many traits of the wicked man he is painting from the person and lot of Job. We have the first of these distinctly personal touches in this somewhat obscure Verse. According to Semitic usage diseases are conceived to be the *children* of death. Job's leprosy, as the most painful and terrible of them all, is called "*the first-*

born of death," just as to this day the Arabs call a deadly fever "the daughter of fate." And this leprosy, this primate among diseases, is described, in a peculiar phrase, as "devouring *the bars* of his skin." The word here rendered "bars" is that which in Chapter xvii. 16 is translated "gates;" and it may be used as a poetical metaphor for the muscles, which are to the skin what bars are to a gate; or perhaps the word "gates" should be retained, and taken to indicate those passages and orifices, those inlets and outlets, of the body at which many forms of disease first display their presence and power. But in either case there can be little doubt that by "the firstborn of death" Bildad intends to denote the *elephantiasis* by which Job's body was being devoured. There can be no doubt that his poetic and indirect way of mentioning that disease is another of those Arab touches of which we have already met so many in this Chapter. The Arabs still shrink from openly naming it: instead of saying "leprosy," they employ some polite periphrasis, partly from a wish not to appear coarse and rude of speech, and partly from a superstitious dread that, if they name it openly, they may incur it, that they will offend some mysterious power which both can and will inflict it on them.

Verse 14.—At last, after suffering many things at the hand of many terrors, the once bold but now trembling sinner is torn from his tent, to be led by "the firstborn of death" to death himself, his "terrors" giving place to "the king of terrors." It is not for him, after having lived out "the lease of nature," to

Pay his breath to time and mortal custom:

he is doomed to a premature and violent end.

Verse 15.—Who the "*they*" are who are to tenant the tent from which the sinner has been torn out, it is almost impossible to decide. I am disposed to think, with Gesenius, that they are "the terrors" of the previous Verse. But other scholars read "*it*" for "*they*," and find the antecedent of the pronoun in "the first-born of death;" while still others read "*What does not belong to him shall dwell in his tent,*" and interpret this "what does not belong to him" to mean "aliens

and strange men," or "jackals and other foul creatures," or even "nettles and other weeds." But, whatever reading or rendering we adopt, the meaning of the phrase is that the tent of the doomed sinner is to be abandoned to desolation, to be regarded with horror as under a curse or ban. And this thought is strengthened and confirmed by the next line, "*Brimstone* shall be sprinkled (or rained) on his homestead;" since here a curse like that which destroyed the doomed cities of the Plain, a fire like that which had consumed Job's own flocks and shepherds, is described as descending not only on the tent, but on all that pertained to it, the entire "homestead." Another Arab touch; for Wetzstein tells us that to the wandering Arab, although his hair-tent leaves no mark on the desert, the thought of the utter dissolution of his house, of the final extinction of his hearth, is so terrible as to induce a settled despair.

Verse 16.—The allusion to Job is too clear and obvious to be missed. The sinner was doomed to perish root and branch, himself and his whole family becoming extinct. And Job had already lost his sons and daughters; his branches *had* been lopped off: and were not his roots withering in the ground? was not his life fast wasting away?

All the more cruel, therefore, was the prediction of *Verse 17*, that alike from pasture and from street, from the Arabs of the city and from the Arabs of the wilderness, his very name and memory should perish. For among the Arab races who retain "the religion of Abraham" in any form, no thought is more hideous than that they should die without descendant and without remembrance.

Still more cruel are *Verses 18-20*; for here the sinner, whom Bildad will not name, though *we* can name him easily enough, is not simply to be forgotten: he is to be *hated* by the men of his own generation and by all who should come after them; so hated, that he is to be thrust from light into darkness, and hunted out of a world in which he is unfit to dwell; so hated, and so hateful, that even a distant posterity will look back on him with horror and amazement.

This is the general sense of these Verses, in which Bildad reaches the climax at once of his description and of his

severity. And on their details I need only add, that in the phrase (*Verse 19*) “the place where he *sojourned*” there seems a hint that the sinner has no abiding-place, no home, even in this world, but that at best no more than a brief visit or sojourn in any place is conceded him; that in the phrase (*Verse 20*) “astonished at his *day*” we have a final instance of the Arabian complexion of this Chapter—it being an Arab custom to speak of a man’s *doom* as his *day*; and that such scholars as Ewald and Delitzsch prefer to read the 20th Verse thus :—

Those who dwell in the West are astonished at his day,
And *they* are amazed *who dwell in the East*.

The Verse will bear that rendering, though not, I think, without a compulsion for which there seems no necessity.

Verse 21.—Lest any should mistake the theme and subject of his sombre sketch, which surely needs no such inartistic legend, Bildad writes under it,

Such are the dwellings of the wicked, •
And this the doom of him that knew not God.

Seldom has a picture been touched in with darker colours. Nevertheless we must admit that it is an accurate, though counterfeit, presentment of facts. There *have* been such bold and lawless sinners as he describes. They *have* been taken in their own toils. And, after having trembled under a burden of terrors they were not able to bear, they *have* been banished from a world they polluted, or have themselves violently rushed out of it, to be soon forgotten by men, or to be remembered only with hatred and execration. We do not and cannot deny that the facts were, and are, as Bildad depicted them. His error was, first, that he took *some* facts for *all*; and, second, that he would admit of only one interpretation of the facts he selected, although they were susceptible of more than one. It by no means follows even in logic that what is true of *some*, is true of *all*, sinners; nor that because sin is *one* cause of suffering, therefore suffering has *no other* cause. And, in point of fact, if there are some sinners who reap the due reward of their deeds in time, there are others,

still more unhappy, who do not: if some are detected, exposed, and put to the ban before they leave the earth, there are others who are neither driven mad by the terrors of a haunted conscience, nor cast out from the society they have injured and debased. And, again, if the most terrible calamities to which man is exposed—the loss of all outward good, a heart torn by anguish and perplexity, a conscience tormented by doubt and apprehension, the reprobation of men and “universal hiss of scorn,” and even the apparent curse of God:—if all these sometimes befall the bold and insolent transgressor, there are also times when, as in the case of Job, they befall the most righteous and perfect of men.

So that, on the whole, we may say that Bildad's reading both of the lot of man and of the providence of God was false, and false because it was narrow and partial and hard. Say it! We may *see* it. For *Job* was the sinner he had in his eye, and much that he had said was as true of Job as it was of the vilest despot who ever disgraced a home or a throne. Was not the lamp of Job put out? Were not his strong strides, his easy and assured steps, narrowed and fettered to the mere circle of the *mezbele*? Did he not move as amid nets and toils, finding no escape? Was he not perplexed and terrified by the miseries which tore and rent his heart, scared with dreams, sickened with misgivings and doubts? Had not his children, his branches, been lopped off? Was he not the scorn and byword of his clan? And yet, *was it for his sins* that he had been stricken? Was it because he knew not God, or had put Him from his thoughts, that he had become the contempt of the tribes? Has posterity forgotten him, or do we remember him only with hatred and amazement? So far from being set forth as a warning against bold impiety, he is set before us as an example of suffering patience. So far from gloating over his ruin, we rejoice in his deliverance.

4. JOB TO BILDAD.

CHAPTER XIX.

WILLING to wound and yet afraid to strike at Job openly and directly, Bildad had drawn a picture of the wicked man in which, as all that was specific in it, all the individualizing and characteristic touches, were taken from the life, and from the life of Job, he doubtless intended him to recognize himself. And, as he listened, Job had at last divined his intention (Chap. xxi. Verse 27), and had been as deeply wounded by "the heavy accent of that moving tongue" as his Friend could have desired. For, in much, Bildad's description was undeniably true. The points he had laboured most were that the sinner is ultimately abandoned both by God and man, and that his name is utterly forgotten by posterity, or remembered only with horror and amazement. And Job felt both that God *had* forsaken him, and that men, even those who were most bound or most dear to him, had turned against him; he feared, he could not but fear, that *his* name would perish from the earth, or be recalled with a shudder as that of a bold bad man who had dared to strive with his Maker and had been beaten in the strife. Now, as his good name was dear to him; as *that* and "his integrity to Heaven" were all he dare now call his own; as, moreover, "he counted himself in nothing else so happy as in a soul remembering his good friends," insomuch that he had turned to his Friends for comfort even when God had forsaken him, we can understand how amazed he was when from the very spring whence comfort should have flowed to him discomfort swelled; how impossible he found it to "forget the shames that they had stained him with" by the mouth of Bildad, and how keenly he was wounded when they dived into his soul only to scatter there

Dangers, death, wringing of the conscience,
Fears and despairs.

Nevertheless, wronged and wounded as he is, "the unstooping firmness of his upright soul" will not suffer him either to yield tamely to the misconstruction of the admitted facts of his life

which they seek to force upon him, or to turn away his own or other eyes from the contemplation of these facts, however mournful they may be, however suggestive of guilt. With a touch of his old impatient fire he protests (Verses 5, 6) that, if they still maintain his calamities to be the due and fair result of his sins, he must still maintain that they spring from the injustice of the God whose interpreters they affect to be. And then, recalling the "guard of patience" which he has set "between his will and all offences," he turns with resolute courage to look upon the facts from which they have drawn a conclusion so sinister, and to inquire what those facts really mean and portend. He dwells on all the details of his abandonment by God (Verses 7-12), and by man (Verses 13-20), tracing even the faithlessness of his kinsfolk and friends to the unprovoked enmity of God (*cf.* Verse 13), and gives us a most moving and pathetic description of the miseries which that desertion has caused him. He himself is moved by his own most moving words, and breaks out into an appeal to his Friends to have pity on him, whatever they may think of him, beseeching them that, "touched with human gentleness and love," they would, if but for a moment, "glance an eye of pity on his losses" and griefs, on a misery that has grown intolerable, unspeakable (Verses 21, 22).

But nothing is so hard as an alienated friend, except it be an alarmed and offended bigot. And Job has to deal with both. They sit utterly unmoved by a cry as piercing and pathetic as ever issued from the lips of man. And after a brief pause, the man, the friend, on whom they have now committed the supreme wrong, repulsing the warm generous heart that leaped toward them and driving it to despair, springs clean out of his despair on the wings of an imperishable faith in the God whom they have traduced, and rises to the very climax and triumph of hope. Bildad had threatened him that his name would be forgotten, or that posterity would remember only to execrate him. And, now, Job replies with a formal and deliberate appeal to posterity. He has that to say which the generations that come after him must never forget, since a great truth once revealed is the everlasting heritage of the race. And the great truth he would fain have cut deep on a

rock for ever is, *that God is his Goel* ; or, rather, the great fact he would have recorded for the comfort of after ages is that, even out of the depths of his despair, he can look up and see a great star of hope shining above his head ; that even " through the hollow eyes of death " he " spies life peering," and is assured that on some distant happy day all the wrongs of time will be redressed. " Transported beyond this ignorant present," he " feels the future in the instant," and knows that the God in whom he has already found an Umpire, an Advocate, a Witness, a Surety, will at last reveal Himself as his Redeemer, to clear him of every charge, and to save him from all evil. God will publicly declare his innocence, and he, even though he die, shall live, and hear that declaration for himself.

CHAPTER XIX.

1. *Then answered Job and said :*
2. *How long will ye rack my soul*
 And break me in pieces with words ?
3. *These ten times have ye insulted me.*
 Shameless that ye are ! Ye astound me.
4. *If it be that I have erred,*
 My error rests with myself :
5. *But if ye will magnify yourselves against me,*
 And urge against me my reproach,
6. *Know ye that God hath wrested my cause,*
 And flung his net about me.
7. *Behold, I exclaim at my wrong, but am not answered ;*
 I cry aloud, but there is no justice !
8. *He hath fenced up my way, that I cannot pass,*
 And set darkness in my paths :
9. *He hath stripped me of mine honour,*
 And taken the crown from my head ;
10. *He hath broken me down on every side, so that I am gone,*
 And hath uprooted my hope like a tree ;
11. *He hath also kindled his wrath against me,*
 And reckoned me for a foe :
12. *His troops advance in array ;*
 They throw up their causeway against me,
 And encamp round my tent.
13. *He hath removed my brethren far away,*
 And those who knew me are wholly estranged from me ;

14. *My kinsfolk stand aloof,
And my familiar friends have forgotten me ;*
15. *The inmates of my house and my maidens count me a stranger,
An alien have I become in their eyes ;*
16. *I call to my servant, but he will not answer,
Though I implore him with mine own mouth :*
17. *My breath has become strange to my wife ;
I am offensive to my brethren :*
18. *The very children despise me,
When I rise up they speak against me :*
19. *All my inward friends abhor me,
And they whom I love are turned against me :*
20. *My bone cleaves to my skin and my flesh,
And I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.*
21. *Have pity on me, have pity on me, O ye my friends,
For the hand of God hath touched me !*
22. *Why should ye persecute me, like God,
And not be satisfied with my pangs ?*
23. *O that my words were written down,
That they were inscribed in the book,—*
24. *With an iron pen, and with lead,
Cut deep in the rock for ever !*
25. *“ I know that my Redeemer liveth ;
And He shall stand, at last, over this dust :*
26. *And after my body hath thus been destroyed,
Yet from my flesh shall I see God ;*
27. *Whom I shall see on my side,
And mine own eyes shall behold, not those of another :
For that my reins pine away within me ! ”*
28. *If then ye should say, “ How may we persecute him ? ”
For ye find the cause of my affliction in me—*
29. *Beware the sword ! For the punishments of the sword are wrathful,
That ye may know there is a judgment.*

Verses 2 and 3.—Job commences his reply, as usual, with a brief discharge of personalities, reproaching the Friends with the cruelty, the pertinacity, the shameless injustice of their assault upon him. His feeling is,

I have too long borne
Your blunt upbraidings and your bitter scoffs,

and he demands of them how much longer, not content with the unutterable anguish he is compelled to suffer, they will add to it by stretching him on the rack of their unfounded censures and rebukes. "These *ten* times have ye insulted me!" he exclaims, every fresh assumption of his guilt being a fresh insult. But the word "ten" is not, of course, to be taken literally. Ten is a round number, and, as being the number of fingers on a man's hands—fingers being probably the first counters—was employed to denote the utmost possible number. What Job means is, "You have carried insult to the last possible point; you have exhausted on me every possible form of censure and false imputation of guilt!" Carried away by their ignorant zeal against him, they are lost to all sense of shame and decency. They are more transported by passion than he by calamity; and he can only sit wrapt in indignant amazement at the evil change that has passed upon them.

Verse 4.—What is it that so strangely excites them? Why are they thus transported from themselves? why turned from friends who revere and pity him into implacable judges with eyes full of condemnation and lofty rebuke? Even if their assumption were true, and he had erred and gone astray, his guilt would remain with himself; *he* would have to expiate it, not they; the punitive results of his offence would not extend to them and darken over their lot. As they would not suffer by his sin, could they not afford to look on it dispassionately, and to mingle a little commiseration for him with their censure of his supposed offence?

Verses 5 and 6.—But their assumption was *not* true. He had not sinned, or had not so sinned as to provoke the calamities that were crushing him. If their theory of a retributive Providence was a true and complete one, then that Providence was manifestly unjust. If they still inferred from the evils which had befallen him that he had done evil, although he had refuted the premisses from which that inference was drawn again and again, he could only reassert his integrity. "The good he stood on was his truth and honesty;" nothing was left him but that: if that should fail him, he must sink into the abyss. And therefore, if nothing would content them but to magnify themselves upon him by depriving him of

his last stay and hope, rather than yield it he would hurl back on them the charge that the God whom they had eulogized and defended was as cruel and unjust as they were, and had "wrested," or perverted, his cause even as they had wrested it.

How could any man who "delighted no less in truth than life" do otherwise? God was *not* punishing him for his iniquity; He was testing, purging, perfecting his righteousness. If God's dealings with Job had meant what they assumed them to mean, God Himself admits that it would have been a perversion of justice. So that, shocking as Job's charges against God sound to some minds, they were after all but an impassioned and rhetorical statement of facts which God Himself confesses to be true.

Bildad had affirmed (Chap. xviii. 8) that the wicked man—meaning Job—was thrust into the net *by his own feet*. "No," retorts Job (*Verse 6*), "it is *God* who has flung his net around me. It is not by my own act that I am entangled in these complicated and binding miseries, but by the act of the Almighty."

Up to this point, then, it is evident that Job is addressing himself mainly and directly to the charges which Bildad had indirectly alleged against him. But, from this point onward, it is equally evident that he detaches himself more and more from the toils of a merely personal controversy. The assertions of his opponent still give direction and colour to his thoughts, indeed. The charge that he was abandoned by God and man supplies the theme of most of the Verses which follow. Nevertheless, as we consider these Verses, we feel that Job is not so much attempting to answer the conclusion Bildad had inferred from the fact of this double abandonment, as brooding over the fact itself, and seeking to ascertain what it really signifies and portends. Indeed, it was Job himself (Chap. xvi. 7-11) who had suggested this the most oppressive aspect of his fate to Bildad, complaining that it was because God hated him that men opened their mouths against him; so that, in dwelling on it, he is really pursuing his own line of meditation rather than that of his opponents. He lingers, as sorrow is apt to do, on all the aspects and details of his miserable lot, finding fresh

food for grief in each of them. But he no longer cares to argue and contend about the interpretation which men put upon them; he is bent upon interpreting them for himself, bent on discovering the *true* interpretation of them, not that which would be most pleasant to himself, or that which would best enable him to discomfit the Friends. He is feeling after, if haply he may find it, the truth that will strengthen him to endure his misery by shewing him that even such misery as his is compatible with the justice and the goodness of God, although it seems to disprove them.

This meditative inquest into the apparently inexplicable facts of his own experience is very finely rendered. He begins with his abandonment by God. He describes the emotions it had quickened and released within him. And here, first of all (*Verse 6*), there was the general sense of entanglement, of being surprised and caught in a net woven out of sins of which he nevertheless knew himself not to be guilty. Then, *Verse 7*, this unaccountable contradiction between his conscience and his fate forces from him cries of expostulation against the terrible wrong done him, which, however, elicit no response: "I cry out, Violence!" like a wayfarer surprised by brigands, "but there is none to answer, nor any that regardeth." They are permitted to carry him off captive, after having inflicted many and grievous wounds. Then, *Verse 8*, every outlet from his captive and imprisoned state seems closed up, so that he can neither find any loophole of escape, nor see to take it even if he should find it. Then, *Verse 9*, witnesses and spectators of his misery find access to his dungeon, and from his abject condition "moralize" his guilt. And thus God, "the main mover of all these harms," the Author of all his misery, added yet this above all, that He tore the crown of righteousness from his head, and stripped him of that robe of virtue and integrity in which, having lost all else, he hoped to involve himself. Bereft of robe and crown, he is left naked and exposed to all the storms of an angry Heaven. And now, no words can render his misery, no figures, however graphic; but he tries to convey it in figures expressive though insufficient. Like a great tree, under whose branches many had found shelter and repose, caught in the mighty hands of a

tempest, and torn up by the roots, he lies, fallen and dishonoured, on the ground (*Verse 10*). God—and this is the climax of all his woes, as it is also the source from which they all flow—is turned to be his Adversary; and, like a hapless city (*Verses 11 and 12*), assailed by an irresistible host, he has to endure the ever-renewed charge and onset of all who serve and follow Him.

Nothing in human life is so terrible as the misery and despair of a man who deems himself abandoned and doomed by God—as they know who have ever conversed with one so utterly lost to hope and impervious to it. But, though not so terrible, it may be questioned whether to be abandoned by men, to be cut off from human sympathy, is not a still more touching and pathetic sorrow. That any man should be wholly abandoned by God is, happily, not only impossible in itself, but so difficult as to be well-nigh impossible for us to conceive. But to be abandoned by men, to be cast out from the charity of even the tenderest hearts, to become the object of universal scorn and loathing and contempt; this, as it is not impossible in itself, so neither is it a condition which few can conceive. It is a misery that touches us close home; for most of us have lost a love or a sympathy that we once dearly prized; and we can imagine how our life would lose all its sweet uses were we, by some great sin, or even by being unjustly suspected of some great sin, to be put out of the pale of human charity and love, to be regarded even by the most friendly eyes with reprehension and abhorrence. Men cannot live in the dislike and contempt of their fellows. They may steel their hearts against it for a time; if it be undeserved, resentment may for a time nerve them to bear it. But, sooner or later, it quite breaks them down, and even the most steadfast spirit quails under it. Job himself quails and faints under it. It is when he realizes how utterly he has been condemned and cast off by all sorts and conditions of men that his spirit is overwhelmed within him; and he cries out, although he knows he cries in vain, “Have pity on me, have pity on me, O ye my friends!”

In *Verses 13–20* he turns from his abandonment by God to complain of this still more pathetic injury. He gives a

singularly complete and touching description of the aversion in which he was held by his own kin, by his own kind. This, too, he traces to the hand of God—not so much blaming the men who shudder and shrink from him as the God who had made him so loathsome and offensive that he was unfitted for human society, repulsive to the very eyes of love. One result, and one of the saddest results, of the condition to which the wrath of God had reduced him is that his wife, his kinsfolk, his clan, his servants and dependents, even the little children, despise and avoid him as a man smitten and accursed of Heaven. First, he tells us (*Verses 13, 14*) that his kindred, his friends, the leading members of his own and related clans—those outside the circle of his own household—were estranged from him. Then (*Verses 15, 16*) he complains that, within that circle, his menials and slaves, even to his body-servant, who once flew at his slightest glance or gesture, now disdain to obey him, and disregard his very entreaties.

Those he commands move only in command,
Nothing in love;

or they disobey even a positive and audible command. To them he is as “a stranger” and a foreigner, *i.e.*, one who has no claim either to their allegiance or to their sympathy: his fall is reflected from their stubborn faces, where it shews itself, after the manner of their kind, without delicacy or reserve. Then, *Verse 17*, a still more bitter complaint rises to his lips, an acuter misery. The very wife of his bosom can no longer endure his presence, and his own brothers, sons of the same womb (as the Hebrew idiom “men of *my* womb” means), are offended at him: the most intimate and beloved members of his family revolt from him. Nay, the desertion is universal. The very children (*Verse 18*) playing about the *mezbele* on which he lies, to whom he once appeared with “brows of so high authority” that they were dumb with fear, deride him, and mock at his convulsive and ineffectual attempts to rise from it. And they have learned this strange and wounding insolence from the men, even from the leading men, of his tribe—his “inward friends,” literally, “the men of his counsel,” those with whom he conferred and to whom he confided his

most secret purposes and thoughts (*Verse 19*). With all these abhorring and reviling him, Job does not need to tell us that the common rank and file of his clan also array themselves against him. *They* would be sure to follow their chiefs, or their neighbours, to become his enemies even if they knew not why they were so, and, "like to village curs, bark when their fellows" did.

Verse 20.—To give new force to this description of his state now that God had abandoned him to the alienation of men, and to hint at the reason of their alienation from him, Job touches on a new feature of the cruel and wasting disease by which his body was being devoured. For *elephantiasis*, while it causes an abnormal swelling of the vascular tissue, especially in the joints of the body, is commonly attended by an extraordinary wasting away of the trunk and the limbs. In medical language, both atrophy and hypertrophy are among its symptoms. And Job now refers to this terrible emaciation of the body partly to indicate how unfit, how incompetent, he was to endure the load of Divine anger and human aversion, and partly to account for the alienation of men. He had touched this point before (*Verse 17*), and now he touches it again, that we may not judge his friends and kinsmen too severely. His disease of itself rendered him, as he is aware, loathsome and offensive to them, and still more offensive because they found in it a sign of the Divine displeasure.

But if it were offensive to *them*, what must it have been to *him*? If it bred strange doubts and questions in their hearts, what must it have bred in his heart? Throughout his speech he has been insisting that it is *God* who has inflicted these undeserved miseries upon him,—God, to whom he owes his pain and anguish of body and the still more intolerable anguish of his soul. If *they* cannot, how can *he*, reconcile the infliction of all this anguish and shame on an innocent man with the justice of God? Once more, therefore, he appeals, though only for a moment, from God to man. Perhaps, as he has recounted the sad tale of his woes, he has seen, or thinks he has seen, some sign of relenting, some quiver of compunction or compassion, on the faces of his Friends. Assuredly, if he has not moved them, he has moved himself to the very depths. And

so, in his profound emotion, he breaks into the imploring and pitiful appeal of *Verses* 21, 22. He beseeches them to let their hearts speak, to stay his fainting soul with some word of ruth or pity. They are his *friends*; *they*, at least, have not wholly abandoned him; they still sit by his side, and deign to hold some little converse with him, whereas other men have left him for ever, and God remains obstinately silent, let him plead and appeal as he will. Will they not open their hearts to him, then, and let him take refuge in their sympathy from the afflicting hand of God and from the harsh misjudgments of the world at large? Why should they add their persecutions to those of God? why take on themselves the judicial and punitive functions proper to Him? Why affect to look down upon him from an usurped height of sinlessness and infallibility? Why should they not be satisfied with the pangs already inflicted on him? why gnaw into his flesh with the keen tooth of calumny, attributing to him, as God had done, sins of which he was not guilty, and treating him as though he were a convicted criminal trembling at their bar?

It was a tender and a moving appeal. But those hard Pharisaic faces were unmoved by it. If their hearts were touched by any human and kindly emotion, they suppressed it. It was their duty to suppress it; their principles forbade them to yield to it. Entrenched in their narrow creed, they have nothing but austere reprobation for their wicked friend. They are the more austere both because he is their friend, and they still have a sort of love—what Sophocles so happily calls “an unloving love”—for him, and because they feel that it costs them something to maintain their austerity. With such sacrifices, they think, God is well pleased. And so, as Job glances eagerly into their hard set faces, he reads in them their unalterable verdict against him. He feels that his last appeal has failed, that he must hope for nothing more from them. Once more the eager hungry heart is thrown back upon itself. But there must be pity, there must be justice, somewhere; in heaven, if not on earth; in death, if not in life; in God, if not with men: and, wherever it is, he will find it or perish in the search. “To be a seeker,” said Cromwell, “is to be of the next best sect to being a finder.” Job was both seeker and

finder, for at last he finds the justice he has sought so long. How, and where, we are about to see.

There is no passage in the whole Poem which has attracted more attention than that we have now reached (*Verses 23-27*), and none which has been more variously interpreted. It commands attention, for it breaks from the context like light from darkness; it soars and towers above it, like a mountain rising precipitously from the plain. From the very depths of his despair Job springs up to the sublime and immovable conviction that, on some happy though distant day, the God who now seems to be his Adversary will prove to be his Friend, clearing him from every charge, delivering him out of all his miseries, and avenging him on all who had set themselves against him. The transition is so abrupt, the inflow of light so sudden and unexpected, as of itself to arrest attention.

Obviously, too, the inspired Poet intended to arrest and fix our attention. *He* is as conscious as we are that his words are weighty with memorable significance, and rise high above their ordinary level; for he calls our attention to them by a brief preface in which he employs figures so striking as to quicken wonder and expectation. The words Job is about to utter are no passing expression of a passing mood. They embody his innermost and most abiding convictions. He is fain to have them written down in "*the book*," *i.e.*, in the Public Book, the State Chronicle, in which only the most illustrious acts and sayings were preserved for the instruction of after ages. Nay, so weighty are they with meaning, and so convinced is he of their truth and value, he would even have them cut with an iron stylus, or chisel, deep into the face of some great rock, and the letters thus hewn into the stone filled up with lead, that they may withstand the devouring tooth of Time, and speak of him, and for him, for ever. Words so introduced must be of the gravest moment. Why should they be inscribed in the golden Book of State, why engraved in monumental characters on the eternal Rock, if he did not hold them to be of transcendent and immortal worth?

For many reasons this inscription demands and requires special and searching examination. The Poet himself has a

high sense of its value. We cannot so much as glance over it without becoming aware that it enshrines truths which are of the utmost moment to us and to all men. In the Original, moreover, it is couched in the brief compressed phrases, with heavy pauses between the phrases, proper to a monumental record; so that it is often difficult to catch the exact shade of thought in it, and the connecting links, or the transitions, from one thought to another; so difficult that almost every phrase has been differently read by different Commentators, and grave diversities of opinion still obtain even on the main sense, the ruling interpretation, of the whole passage. We must, therefore, devote special attention to it; (1) seeking to define, by an accurate exegesis, the meaning of every separate word and clause; and then (2) selecting that interpretation of the passage as a whole to which the meaning of its several parts most clearly points.

But, even before we commence our examination of it, we must try to fit this passage into the main drift and argument of the Chapter. In so far, then, as the passage is polemical, part of Job's reply to Bildad, it connects itself with it thus. Bildad had threatened him (Chap. xviii. 17-20) that his name and memory should perish; that posterity would either utterly forget him, or remember only to condemn him with horror and amazement. Job now makes a solemn and formal appeal to posterity. So far from forgetting or condemning him, he is sure that subsequent generations will remember the story of his faith and patience, and "the end of the Lord" concerning him, with sympathy and admiration: he is sure that he has at least one thing to say which the world will never let die, one bequest to make which cannot fail to bear his name honourably down the stream of time. This treasure is the truth, the fact, of a life beyond the grave, a *retributive* life, in which every man will receive the due reward of his deeds far more fully and exactly than in this present life.

Now great moral truths are never discovered by nations or races, but by individual men. And yet even the wisest and most forward-looking men but rarely discover a truth much in advance of the thoughts and yearnings of their own race, in their own generation. As a rule the new truth is in the air of

the time; many have some dim consciousness or presentiment of it, and are groping after it, if haply they may find it. And at last one man, one happy man, prepared for the achievement by the peculiar bent of his nature, or gifted with the vision and the faculty divine, or driven onward by peculiar personal experiences into untrodden regions of thought, grasps the present and widely-diffused but evasive truth, and compels it into a definite and permanent form. Of this common process of discovery we probably have an illustration in the case of Job. There are many indications that, both in the patriarchal age, *i.e.*, the time of Job himself, and in the Solomonic age, *i.e.*, the time of the Poet to whom we owe this *divina commedia*, the thought of a better and more enduring life, a strictly *moral* life, hidden from men by the darkness of death, was in the atmosphere; that the best and highest minds were reaching after it and yearning for it. And in Job this general thought took form, this common yearning rose to articulate expression, this wide-spread hope became a living and vitalizing faith. His personal experience, the wrongs and calamities he endured, the doubts and conflicts these miseries bred in his heart, prepared and qualified him to become the interpreter of the general heart of his time, to discover the truth which alone could satisfy it. It was simply impossible for him, since he believed the great Ruler of men to be just and unchangeable, to conclude that the God whom he had done nothing to offend was really hostile to him, though He seemed hostile, or that He would always continue to *seem* hostile to him, never acknowledging his integrity. And as he had lost all hope of being redeemed and vindicated in this life, as therefore he could no longer admit the present to be a strictly retributive life, he was compelled to look for, till he discovered, a retributive life beyond "the bourn." Fading out of this world, he looks for, and finds, a juster and a better world to come. *This* I believe to be the root of the whole matter, simple as it sounds; *this* the line along which Job's thoughts travelled, or flew, to the lofty conclusion he reached; *this* the spring of living water that threw up the beautiful fountain of hope which still attracts our eyes.

I. Bearing the origin of Job's hope in mind we shall tho

better understand the Inscription in which it is most clearly and strongly expressed. This Inscription is introduced by a brief Preface, *Verses* 23, 24. Whatever may become of his other words—some of which he elsewhere admits were “windy words,” and therefore might well be left to be blown away by the wind,—he wants the words he is about to utter to remain : for he is sure that they deserve,

with characters of brass,
A fortified residence 'gainst the tooth of time
And rasure of oblivion.

They express his deepest, his unalterable, convictions. His previous Speeches reflect all the fluctuating and uncertain moods and emotions of his soul,—his doubts and fears, his cravings and aspirations, his indignation against God and man : but now he is going to say only what he is *sure of*, what he *knows*. And, therefore, he wishes his words to be written down in *the book*, a book formed of skins or parchments, as the etymology of the Hebrew word denotes ; he would have them enshrined in the most permanent form of ancient literature, in the public records in which only the most memorable words and deeds were inscribed (Schultens, *in loco*).¹ Nay, more, he is conscious of such a worth in his words that even parchment is not durable enough for him, nor are the public chronicles guarded with sufficient care. He would fain have them *cut deep in the rock*, raised above all the accidents of time, that they may speak with an eternal tongue to the fugitive generations of men. And, in very deed, his wish has been more than fulfilled ; for, as St. Chrysostom, commenting on these Verses, finely says : “ Job’s words have not been written down with an iron stylus, as he desired, but far more durably. Had they been written as he wished, time would have obliterated them ; but they have been inscribed in the imperishable records of

¹ Although, on the authority of Schultens, I have assumed the existence of a public record, or state-book, in which memorable events were inscribed, I am bound to add that many of our best scholars deny that we have any proof of the existence of such a book or record among the Arab races of the time of Job, or even of the time of the Poet to whom we are indebted for this great drama.

Holy Scripture. They are graven on the rock of God's Word, and there they are still read, and minister comfort to all generations."

But all this is only preface. The Inscription itself is contained in Verses 25-27. In the Hebrew it is written throughout in the true monumental, or lapidary, style, the style appropriate to words which were to be so laboriously hewn and engraved. The thought is crushed into the fewest possible phrases, the phrases into the fewest possible words; and, as might be expected in so memorable a sentence, a sentence designed to quicken thought and hope in many generations, at least some of the words are capable of a double sense, and the full intention of the whole is not to be arrived at save with labour and pains. Let us take it word by word.

Verse 25.—I know. The Hebrew verb denotes absolute perception, absolute cognition, absolute certainty of knowledge. It is no mere guess, speculation, yearning that we are to hear from him, but that of which he is intimately persuaded, profoundly and unalterably convinced; the very best and surest thing he has to tell us.

My redeemer, literally "*my Goel*." This *Goel* is a name for the next of kin, who, among the Hebrews and Arabs, was bound to redeem a kinsman who had fallen into debt or bondage, and to avenge his blood if he had been slain in a *vendetta*, in a family or clan quarrel. Job's choice of this remarkable and most expressive word may have been in part determined by a thought he had already expressed in Chapter xvi. 18, where, as we have seen, while formally appealing to the earth not to hide his innocent blood, he really appeals to the very God who had shed his blood to avenge it, to avow and establish his innocence. But we cannot here take the word at less than its full worth, as including the Redeemer as well as the Avenger. Though he now lies crushed and abandoned on the earth, Job is sure that his *Goel* will interpose both to rescue him from his bondage to loss and pain, calumny and death, and to avenge him on those who, while professing to be his friends, are nevertheless his "adversaries without cause." And assuredly, Job had no mere man, or kinsman, in his thoughts. Men, even the best and most beloved, had

utterly failed him, and revolted from him, deeming him to be accursed. Were they who added to his pains the most exquisite torture of all, stretching him on the rack of their pious suspicions and censures, at all likely to confront even men on his behalf? How much less, then, were they likely to confront the Almighty Himself? His Goel could only be the God whom he had already besought to decide for a man against Himself, of whose eternal justice he was so fully persuaded as to believe that He would raise and vindicate the very man whom He Himself had smitten to the earth. This point—an important one—is put beyond all doubt by the first clause of the next Verse, from which we learn both that Job expected to *see* this Goel, and to *find God* in Him—"from my flesh shall I see *God*."

This Goel *liveth*. He has not to come into being; He exists. So much at least the verb implies, even if it does not imply, as some contend, that Job's Redeemer and Avenger, because He has life in Himself, always has lived and always will live. Probably the tacit antithesis in the Poet's mind was simply this: "I die, but my Goel does not; he lives."

And he shall stand; or, more literally, "*he shall rise up*"—"rise up," even after Job has "*gone down*" into Hades and the grave; rise up, as the word hints, like a conqueror, a redeemer, a redeemer being always a conqueror: for how should he deliver the captive save by subduing his captor? There will be a victorious apparition, manifestation, epiphany of the Goel, who is even now already resenting the wrongs of his kinsman and arming Himself for his deliverance.

At last. The original word is ambiguous, and may be taken substantively or adverbially. Many scholars take it in the first way, and render it by *ein Nachmann*, a Survivor. They understand Job to mean that this *Goel*, who *lives* and is to appear for him, is absolutely "the Last One," that He is to survive all men, that He remains unchanged through all the sorrowful and obscuring changes of time; that, as "the Last One," He has power and right to pronounce the final word of every controversy; that, as "the Survivor" of Job, He is bound to vindicate and avenge him. But, though in itself the word be ambiguous, the common Hebrew usage of

it demands, I think, that it should be taken adverbially, that we should render it by "*at last*." Purposely or necessarily, because he did not know or did not wish to say *when* his deliverance should come, Job leaves the time of it indefinite. He simply throws it forward far into the future, to some distant date unknown or undetermined.

Over this dust. "*Upon the earth*" is the rendering of our Authorized Version, and is perhaps as good and probable a rendering as that given in the text, although many recent Commentators give the preference to the former. Here, again, however, we have an ambiguous phrase, capable of more than one sense. It is not only that we may choose between "over my dust" and "upon the earth;" but even if we prefer the former, are we to take it literally? Could Job have meant that the victorious apparition of the Goel was to take place over his tomb? In all probability he was as ignorant of *the scene* of his deliverance as of *the time* and *the manner* of it; and had he been called upon to give it a local habitation and a name, would have placed it, as we shall see, in Hades, the unseen world beyond the grave, of which he knew so little. It is better, therefore, to take this phrase metaphorically, and to understand it as equivalent to "*after my death*."

A German scholar (Oetinger) summarizes the Verse thus: "I know that He (the Goel) will at last come, place Himself over the dust in which I have mouldered away, pronounce my cause just, and place the crown of victory on my head." But, without adding anything to the sense of the words, I believe we may venture to draw out and expand this summary, that we may, indeed, more adequately summarize the contents of the Verse thus: "I, for my part, know—though I know not *how* I know—and am sure, that my Goel already exists, and is preparing to take up my cause; that God Himself will be my Goel, that *He* will do a kinsman's part by me, both redeeming me from my miseries and wrongs and avenging me on those who have inflicted them upon me. *When* He will come I know not, nor what will be the scene and theatre of his interposition; but this I know, that at last—far off—long after I have sunk into the tomb, He will appear for me, clad in robes of victory and of judgment."

Verse 26.—And after my body: literally, “after *my skin*.” Possibly the word “skin” is here used for “body,” because Job had just complained (Verse 20) that nothing was left of his body but skin and bone, that he had escaped only with the skin of his teeth. Possibly, as my friend Dr. Morison suggests—for the construction of the whole phrase is very rude and primitive—he may mean “when that which is *within my skin*,” now dropping from me, has been destroyed. But, however we account for the word or take the phrase, there can hardly be a doubt he means to say that the process of disease, which has already worked such strange and dreadful havoc in his flesh, will go on until his body, to the last fibre and integument of it, is consumed. For this meaning is sustained by the clauses which precede and follow this.

Hath thus. As he utters the word “thus,” it is but natural to suppose him pointing to his rotting and emaciated frame.

Been destroyed. The verb implies extreme violence. It might be rendered, “*has been torn in pieces and devoured*,” and admirably denotes both the gnawing pangs of his disease and the dreadful waste and havoc it inflicted.

Taking the phrase, “*And after my body hath thus been destroyed*,” as a whole, there really seems no room to doubt that Job fully expected a speedy death, fully expected, therefore, that his deliverance would not take place till after his death. The conclusion is put, one should think, wholly beyond question when we combine with this phrase the final clause of the previous Verse, “*And he shall stand at last over this dust*.” And yet there are scholars who gravely maintain these phrases to mean no more than that Job believed he should be *reduced to a mere skeleton* before God appeared to save and clear him, that his rehabilitation would therefore take place in this present life! If he meant no more than that, he has surely taken the strangest way of conveying his meaning. A man whose body is torn to pieces, devoured, destroyed, reduced to dust, *should* be dead, if words have any force or significance. And, moreover, if Job only intended to predict an occurrence so common as the restoration of life, health, and wealth, to one emaciated by disease and broken by misfortune, why does he introduce his prediction with

such an amazing pomp and emphasis? Why speak as though he had lit on some grand discovery so invaluable and transcendent that it deserved to be written in the State Chronicle and cut deep in the Rock for ever? The whole tone, no less than the express words, of the Inscription demand a far larger interpretation than this.

Yet from my flesh. Another ambiguity, and possibly another studied ambiguity, meets us here. For the Hebrew word translated variously "from," "in," "out of," "without," my flesh—"from" being the literal translation—may be taken, and indeed is taken, in either of two senses. (1) Many take it, not wholly without reason, as equivalent to "*in* my flesh." They regard the body as the place out of which Job is to look when he sees God. For them the phrase means, "*Looking out from* my flesh." (2) Others take it as equivalent to "*free from*," "stript of," "outside," my flesh. Unclothed by this body, or by any body, I shall look for and find my Goel. Thus Ewald renders it, "und ohne mein Fleisch;" and Heiligstedt, "*sine carne mea*."¹ In the first case, Job counts on a restored physical life, a new body; and in the second, he expects a spiritual vision of God. And though the other conclusion is supported by some weighty authorities, I cannot but think that the latter of these two, a spiritual vision, agrees better than the first with the whole tone and movement of his thought. For, obviously, he is expecting a Divine Vindication of his integrity only after he lies in the dust; and it is not likely that, with this great hope suddenly invading his

¹ There is a striking illustration of the double sense which this word "*from*" bears, even in the English usage of it, in Shakespeare's *King Richard the Third* (Act iv. Scene 4). In the dialogue between the King and his brother's widow, Queen Elizabeth, the following passage of arms occurs:—

K. Rich. Then know that *from* my soul I love thy daughter.

Q. Eliz. My daughter's mother thinks it *with* her soul.

K. Rich. What do you think?

Q. Eliz. That thou dost love my daughter *from* thy soul:

So *from* thy soul's love didst thou love her brothers;

And *from* my heart's love I do thank thee for it.

K. Rich. Be not so hasty to confound my meaning;

I mean that *with* my soul I love thy daughter;

And mean to make her queen of England.

mind and taking instant but full possession of it, he would at once begin to speculate on whether or not, when he had shuffled off the loathsome coil in which he was entangled, he should be clothed upon with "flesh" in some new and higher form. Such a speculation would have been well-nigh impossible at such a time. That Job, rising from his long agony, his long inquest, to a sudden recognition of a great light of hope burning behind the dark curtains of death, and so far streaming through them as to give him courage to sustain a burden otherwise intolerable, should instantly fall into a curious speculation about "in the body," or "out of the body," would be contrary to all the laws which, as experience proves, govern the human mind at a crisis such as that at which he had arrived. And, therefore, though, with the best Commentators, we understand him to be simply looking forward to some spiritual vision of the Divine justice and grace, we shall do well to retain some word as ambiguous as his own, and to conclude that as he neither knew when, or in what form, the great deliverance for which he hoped would be vouchsafed him, so also he neither knew nor curiously inquired *how*, in what form, it would find him when it came. All he knew was that, somehow, after his loathsome body had been destroyed, God would redeem him; but whether he would then be in a body or out of a body, he cannot tell and does not speculate. It will be after death. It will be in Hades, perhaps; but of the physical conditions of Hades he knows, and professes to know, nothing.

Shall I see God? No one short of God can be his Goel in the region on which he is about to enter. And as he must *see* his Goel—for what to him is any vindication of which he is unconscious? and how can he be delivered without being sensible of it?—he must *see* God.

Verse 27.—On this point he is absolute, recurring to it again and again even in this brief Inscription. As, for example, in the very next words. "**Whom I shall see;**" and see "**for me,**" that is, *on my side*, redressing the wrongs which He Himself has inflicted, and clearing the character which He Himself has brought under suspicion; no longer an Adversary, but a Champion; no longer *against* me, but *for* me.

So, once more, in the next clause of the Verse. **And mine own eyes shall behold, not those of another:** by which, of course, he does not mean to assert that *no one but himself* will be cognizant of his vindication; but that, come when it may, *he himself must be cognizant of it*; that, even though it should come when men account him dead, he shall be alive unto God and to the action of God on his behalf. There are men among us now—men surely not more unselfish and generous than Job, nor in any way of finer moral calibre—to whom “immortal life” means only “posthumous energy” and influence, who flatter themselves that they shall be content to die, and may even be said to live, if only the good they do lives after them. But such a life as that is no life to Job. *He* cannot be content with a posthumous vindication of which he is to know nothing. He must himself be there to behold and share the triumph of his Divine Goel. That others behold it is not enough. Half, if not all, the pathos of his words springs indeed from this intense and passionate regard for his character, his righteousness. He cleaves to it, and will not let it go, though all the winds and storms of Heaven beat upon him. His one thought, repeated in many forms, is,—

The good I stand on is my truth and honesty;
If these should fail, I, with mine enemies,
Will triumph o'er my person, which I weigh not,
Being of those virtues vacant.

But if this supreme good is not to fail him, if his truth and honesty—his integrity to Heaven—are to be vindicated, then he feels that the vindication will not be complete unless he, in his own person, is present to witness and rejoice in it.

It seems like trifling to come down from this high passion and flight of a much-tormented human spirit to observe that no sinister inference, no logical or dogmatic inference of any kind, can be fairly drawn from Job's use of the word “eyes.” It *would* be trifling if some grave and learned Commentators had not seriously inferred from it nothing less than—the resurrection of the body! Job cannot mean, they argue, that he is to be redeemed in the world of spirits; for he is to see his Redeemer with his own eyes; and how can he have eyes

unless he has a body? Hath not a spirit eyes, then? or, rather, do we ever conceive of one without? Has not God Himself, the great pure Spirit, eyes? or do not we, and the Hebrew prophets, and the Christian apostles, constantly speak of Him as having larger and keener eyes than ours, *i.e.*, keener and swifter perceptions? How *can* men study a poem so prosaically! How can even these dogmatic Dryasdusts so far forget the inevitable limitations of human language and thought as to make it necessary to remind them that the misuse of so common a figure of speech proves nothing except the blindness of those who misapprehend it!

For that, or, for this, my reins pine away within me. *My reins*, or, as we should say, “my heart:” “the reins” being with the Hebrews the seat of passion and yearning affection, as “the heart” is with us. It need hardly be added that what Job’s heart pines for is the coming of that Divine Epiphany which he has been foretelling, that glorious appearing of the great God his Saviour. His very hope was a new element of agitation and disturbance. He was to *see* his Goel; as yet he could only *hope* for his advent. And as hope deferred maketh sick the heart of man, we need not be surprised to find him, even after he has risen to this great height of faith, sinking back again into pining heart-sickness and despair.

The last two Verses of the Chapter, *Verses* 28, 29, are not part of the Inscription, although they complete both the figure and the sense of it. In relation to himself Job had thought of the Goel as a Redeemer; but he now turns on the Friends who “persecuted” him with their unfounded charges and insulting suspicions, and warns them that if they persist in their hostility, He who appears to deliver him will also appear to judge them, and to smite them with the sword of the Avenger.

II. This is the exegesis of this memorable Inscription—an exegesis to which I believe most of our living Hebrew scholars would, on the whole, assent. But now that we have arrived at the meaning of its several parts, we must address ourselves to the still more difficult and weighty task of fixing on that interpretation of the whole passage to which they most clearly

point—a task in the course of which we shall be obliged to retread much of the ground we have already traversed.

What *is* the ruling Interpretation of this great passage, then? Put briefly, I would venture to state it thus: *Job is profoundly convinced of a retributive life to come.* He is fully and unalterably persuaded that, after his death, God will appear to redeem and avenge him; but *when* God will appear, and *how*, he neither knows nor speculates. *That*, probably, is the most reasonable interpretation to put on the words we have so closely examined, neither going beyond their obvious significance nor falling short of it. But as there are able and learned men who insist on seeing more in them than this, or refuse to see so much, we must, if possible, bring our Interpretation to some clear and decisive test.

It will be admitted, I think, that the fairest and most decisive test open to us is this: Does, or does not, this interpretation fall in with the general current of Job's thoughts and hopes in so far as we have already discovered them? Is, or is not, this passage, so read, the natural sequence and climax of the convictions and beliefs he has already expressed? Do, or do not, many of the lines of thought we have already traced in the Poem fairly lead up to it? In my exegesis of this passage I have already shewn incidentally that our Interpretation fairly meets even this severe and conclusive test. I have pointed out that Job's Inscription only carries to a higher power, and conveys in a clearer way, thoughts and convictions to which he had previously given utterance. But, to make the argument complete, I must touch upon some of these points again, and add to them a new series of similar proofs.

I find, then, no less than six lines of thought in the previous Chapters of the Poem which run up into and are harmonized and combined in the passage before us.

1. There is his general conviction that, though for a while, and for purposes which he cannot fathom, God may seem to be his enemy, nevertheless, as he had done nothing to offend and alienate Him, it was impossible that God could be really alienated from him, impossible that He should not be his Friend. This, as we have seen again and again, was the conviction by which Job was sustained throughout his long and

weary controversy with "the men of his counsel," and to which, though he may lose sight of it for a time, he recurs with an added force. He had long since lost confidence in the doctrine he once held, and which the Friends still urge upon him, that, in this life, every man receives his due. *That*, since it is contradicted by the most intimate facts of his own experience, is no longer credible to him. But he has not, therefore, lost confidence in the justice of God: he is simply driven to the persuasion that the Divine Justice is of a larger scope than he had hitherto conceived; that it covers a wider space and demands longer periods for its full development, periods which stretch beyond the narrow span of mortality. He does not, and he will not, believe that

We shall be winnowed with so rough a wind
That even our corn shall seem as light as chaff,
And good from bad find no partition.

He is sure that they must find partition, so sure that, since the winds of time *are* so rough as to make many a man's corn seem light as chaff, he can only believe that we shall pass beyond the winds of time into some more equal atmosphere, in which the good will be separated from the bad and the corn be gathered into the garner of God. And what, after all, is his Inscription but a still clearer and weightier statement of this abiding conviction of his heart?

2. This conviction has already taken many forms. Thus, for example, while studying his appeal in Chapter xvi. 18, "O Earth, cover not my blood!" we saw that, while formally calling on the earth to attest his innocence, it is really God to whom he appeals, and even to God *against* God. It is God who has shed his blood (Chap. xvi. 13), and yet Job is so sure of his justice as to believe that He will avenge the very blood which He Himself has shed. And is there any very great and sudden leap from this conviction that God would not permit his blood to cry to Him in vain, to the conviction that, whenever God appeared to answer that cry, he, Job, should be there to see it? Is not the Inscription, after all, but the natural sequence and climax of the persuasion which found an earlier expression in this pathetic appeal?

3. This same general conviction of the Divine Justice, and of its inevitable manifestation in the life and lot of man, rises to a still bolder utterance in Chapter xvi. 21, where Job demands and entreats nothing less than that God would justify him against God Himself, against the wrongs which He Himself had done him, as well as against the suspicions and misconstructions of his fellows. And with this indomitable persuasion of a Justice in heaven so pure that it would even listen and respond to an appeal against itself, is it any wonder that Job was led on by it to the yet more definite persuasion that, if the response to that appeal were not vouchsafed within the bounds and coasts of time, it would be vouchsafed beyond them? Is not the one a natural and logical inference from the other?

4. Even so early as in his first reply to Bildad (Chap. x. 7), the man of Uz could assert his innocence, and God's knowledge of it, to God's face; he could say, "*Thou knowest I am not guilty*, though Thou hast searched for my fault and made inquisition for my sin." And in his very next speech (Chap. xiii. 15-19) he repeats this assertion in a more elaborate form:—A sinner would not dare to come before God, whereas *he* longs for nothing so much; he is sure that he has right on his side; sure that, if only he could reach the Divine Presence, his innocence would be patent, and need no proof: if he believed that any man could justly allege aught against him, he would die of very shame. In short, as he shews in every word he utters, he is as fully convinced of his own innocence as he is of the justice of God. And if God be just, and man be innocent, must not God justify man,—redress his wrongs, release him from his sufferings, and grant him a clear and happy issue out of all his trials?

5. Another, and yet a similar, line of thought leads to the same conclusion. In Chapter ix. 32-35 Job gives vent to his longing for an Umpire, a Daysman, an Arbiter capable of bringing him and God together in judgment, and of enforcing his decision even on the Almighty. And what this prophetic yearning really implied was, as we saw, a craving for a humanized God, God in a human form; *God*, that He might have power with God; and *man*, that Job may not be over-

awed by dread of Him. In Chapter xvi. 21 he demands that this Umpire should be both his Judge and his Advocate, both pleading and deciding for him. In Verse 19 of the same Chapter he affirms that this Umpire and Judge is already his Witness; that God is testifying to him in heaven even while He is afflicting him on earth. And in Verse 3 of the next Chapter he begs God to be his Surety, surety with Himself, until the cause shall come on for trial and decision. Now, I do not see how any one who has observed how many and what auspicious forms God has already taken in the mind of Job can wonder to find Him taking still another and a still more gracious form. It is natural, if not inevitable, that He who has already appeared as Umpire, Judge, Advocate, Witness, Sponsor, should also appear as *Goel*, *i.e.*, as Redeemer and Avenger: for to what end should God judge his cause, to what end should He advocate it, and testify to it, and go bail for him until it was tried, if He were not also to execute the sentence by which his wrongs would be redressed and his adversaries punished and defeated?

6. That Job should anticipate that his Redemption and Vindication would be deferred until he had passed, through the gate and avenue of death, into the dim Hadean Kingdom whose physical conditions were unknown to him, and whose *moral* conditions had hitherto been at the best but dimly seen; that he should therefore acknowledge the date and mode of his trial and acquittal to be hidden from him, while yet he was sure that he should be both acquitted and avenged, is in the most perfect accord with another line of thought along which he has led us again and again. One of the earliest and clearest expressions of it may be found in the prayer of Chapter xiv. 13–15. In that prayer he beseeches God to hide him in Hades, hide him with loving care as something too precious to be lost, until the day of wrath be past; he beseeches Him to fix a term beyond which He would not suffer his faithful servant to be wronged and tormented. If He would but do that, Job would stand, like a sentinel, at his post on earth until he fell at it, and then stand at his post in Hades, however long and hard the term might be, until it pleased God to discharge and release him. This strain is resumed in

Chapter xvii. 11-16, and the hope of a life beyond the grave is yet more elaborately wrought out. He is sure that God *will* appear for him, but *when* he knows not. He no longer anticipates that it will be in this life, "for his breath is spent, his days are extinct;" but he will carry his hope down into the grave with him. Beyond "that bourn," since not before he passes it, God will vindicate him. He will find rest and a home in Hades; and as, to reach that unknown kingdom, he must needs go through the grave, he is already familiarizing himself with it, crying to corruption, "Thou art my father!" "My mother, and my sister!" to the worm. Released by the stroke of death—whose sword ennobles while it smites—from this hindering mortality, he hopes, he believes, he is sure, that in his spirit he shall see God, and find in Him both a Judge and a Friend. And it is simply *this* conception carried to a higher degree of clearness and certainty that lends weight and force to his Inscription. A judgment in Hades, in which the Judge will shew Himself his Friend, in which all the tangled skein of his life will be unravelled by wise and kindly hands, and the insoluble problem of his strange and self-contradicting experience will at last be solved,—*this* is what Job still looks for on that happy day when he shall see God for himself, and find his *Goel* in that Almighty Deliverer. Just as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, through having no inheritance in the promised land, were led to look for a better country, even a heavenly; so Job, by being denied justice in this world, is driven to look for a better and more heavenly world, even that which is to come.

All the main lines of thought which we have already found in this Poem, then, run up easily and naturally into this noble and unique passage. If it rises like a lofty summit from the ordinary level of Job's thoughts, it nevertheless does not stand alone; it is but the crowning summit in a long chain of peaks to which their curves attract and conduct our eyes.

But, despite all these arguments, because they do not see them or because they do not feel their force, there are those who insist on seeing in this passage *more* than it fairly contains. They *will* find in it the Christian doctrine of the

resurrection of the body, as well as an assurance of a future retributive life. All that I can allege in favour of their interpretation is that it is graced by ancient authority. The Targum, for example, renders the passage thus: "I know that my Redeemer liveth; and hereafter his redemption will arise (become a reality) over the dust (into which I shall be dissolved): and *after my skin is again made whole* this will happen: and *from my flesh* I shall again behold God." But not to insist on the fact that even the more critical ancient authorities pronounce against this interpretation, and that almost the whole critical school of modern times utterly rejects it, I will only remark that it is a patent anachronism, that it carries a distinctively Christian doctrine back to a period long anterior to that at which, by his resurrection from the dead, Christ brought life and immortality to light; and that a physical, or a metaphysical, speculation such as this would have been in Job is utterly alien to the tone and movement of his thoughts. And I will only ask those who cleave to it in the teeth of evidence to bear in mind that, by snatching at arguments for Christian doctrine which they themselves must confess to be dubious and opposed to the weight of critical authority, they do but shew their want of faith in it, instead of, as they intend, their faith. A doctrine which can stand on its own proper evidence, as the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead can very certainly do, does not need to be buttressed up by arguments which are widely disputed and condemned. To resort to such arguments is only, in effect, to render it as doubtful as the arguments themselves. Those who *will* adduce them can hardly be so sure of it as they profess to be.

But if there are some who will see more in this passage than it fairly contains, there are others who see *less*. A few learned and devout scholars, whose verdict is entitled to the gravest respect, refuse to admit that Job here asserts his conviction of a life beyond the grave. Their great argument is:—That if Job had once risen to so noble and consolatory a conviction, it is incredible that he should afterwards have sunk into such depths of despair as we find him in; and that therefore they are compelled, however reluctantly, to conclude

that he looked for nothing more than a future deliverance within the limits of the present life, on *this* side the grave. Now I trust I have already shewn that Job's faith in a life beyond the grave finds expression, not in this Inscription alone, but in many other sentences of less, but still of great, weight; that, in fact, it pervades the whole poem. But there are other arguments against what seems to me the wholly inadequate interpretation maintained by the scholars and commentators to whom I have referred, which I beg to submit to their consideration, and to that of as many as are disposed to agree with them.

1. If Job had no more to tell us than this, why does he introduce his Inscription with such extraordinary pomp? Health after sickness, wealth after ruinous loss, peace after trouble, are not such extraordinary vicissitudes as to demand that they should be inscribed in the State Chronicle or graven on the eternal Rock.

2. It is questionable whether Job *does* afterwards fall into such utter despair as this hypothesis assumes. I suspect we shall find, as we study the subsequent Chapters of this Poem, that, from this point onward, the inevitable reactions from hope to despair constantly grow less forcible and marked.

3. And even if Job does, again and again, sink into despair, how is that to be reconciled with the fact of his being firmly persuaded that, within a few weeks or months, he was to be reinstated in health and wealth, name and fame, any more than with the fact of his being fully convinced that he should be redeemed and justified beyond the grave? The *nearer* hope should surely have been the more consolatory and sustaining.

4. The interpretation is, so far as I can see, alien to the whole tone of Job's mind as disclosed in the Poem. He had now reached a point at which he despaired of life. The foul leprosy which was devouring him limb by limb had already brought him to the borders of the grave; and more fatal even than the pangs of disease must have been the agony of his distracted mind and lacerated heart.

He cannot long hold out these pangs;
The incessant care and labour of his mind

Health wrought the mure, that should confine it in,
So thin, that life looks through and will break out.

And why should he care to keep it in? Life had grown loathsome and abhorrent to him, and that for sadder reasons, and reasons of more weight, than even the fatal progress of his foul disease. He had discovered that he could not trust even those whom he loved best, and who had seemed to love him best. Wife, brothers, friends, clan, servants,—all had failed him. So sad and strange, so almost unparalleled, was his doom, that not even one heart seems to have been quite true to him. What, then, had life to offer him, however bright and favourable its conditions? Health to live in a world so overcast, wealth to lavish on those who had abandoned and betrayed him,—were these a boon so great that he should crave to have it inscribed in ineffaceable characters on an imperishable monument?

5. If it is easy for us, sitting placidly in our easy chairs, to determine that great convictions and inspiring hopes, once reached, can never be forgotten, that a man once possessed of them does not so relax his hold of them as to fall back into the despair from which they rescued him, none who have gone through the agonies of loss, public reprobation, bereavement, and the gnawing pangs of a fatal and loathsome disease, will be quite so sure of that. *We* believe, and are persuaded, that God's will concerning us is always a good and perfect will; but when that Will means loss of health to us, or loss of reputation, or loss of wealth—which, oh, shame on our manhood and our faith! we call "ruin"—are we instantly and invariably content with it? *We* believe, and are persuaded, on better and larger grounds than Job, that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord; but when wife, or husband, or child is taken from us, does this sacred and assured conviction instantly and always save us from agonies of grief and hopelessness? No man, I think, who has felt the heavier blows of Change and Loss will be much surprised to find that a man of like passions with himself was sometimes untrue even to his most intimate convictions, and felt as though his most solid hopes had melted into thin air.

6. Job's very hope—a point to be much marked—was a new ingredient of agitation and suspense, cast into the seething passion of his breast as he himself tells us in the words, "*For that my reins pine away within me!*" He knew and was sure that God would appear for him and redeem him; but he did not know when, or how. The cry of his heart was, How long, O Lord, how long! And if it was well for him that he had a sure and certain hope of deliverance, yet who that knows how narrow is the margin between despair and the sickness of hope deferred, will marvel that Job's hope did not at once allay the trouble and agitation of his spirit? His very hope would fill him with a sick, and almost heartbreaking, longing for its fulfilment.

5. ZOPHAR TO JOB.

CHAPTER XX.

WHEN Zophar first appeared on the scene I described him as "the common good man of his day, the vulgar but sincere formalist; the man who implicitly believes what he has been taught, and demands not only that every one else should believe it too, but also that they should accept it in the very forms in which it has commended itself to him, and, above all, that they should refuse to believe anything *more*. He is sharp and bitter and hasty in his tone, moreover. . . . A dangerous man to differ from or to outstrip; the kind of man with whom it is of no use to go a mile if you go but a single inch beyond him; the kind of man, too, who is very apt to call down fire from heaven whenever he cannot conveniently lay his hand on the match-box." And again, when he first opened his lips, I described him as the champion of orthodoxy. "A man without culture or erudition, he stands for and utters the common thought, the current conceptions and formulas, of his time, and savours of bigotry, as self-styled orthodoxy is wont to do. He catches up the opinions in vogue, and delivers

them as *his* opinions with a tone of authority. He cannot quote oracles like Eliphaz; but, nevertheless, there is a touch of 'Sir Oracle' about him, and when he 'opes his mouth' no dog must bark dissent. With singular fidelity to nature, this comparatively unlearned and unspiritual champion of accepted traditions is depicted as harsh, authoritative, sudden, and loud in censure. He is 'hasty and tinderlike upon too trivial motion.' 'A very little thief of occasion robs him of a great deal of patience.'"

If this description of him seems overcharged, tinged with colours of dislike for the type of man he represents, now that Zophar makes his last appearance before us we shall have an opportunity of putting it to a decisive test by comparing with it the man himself. We shall see him acting and speaking after his kind, and be able to determine for ourselves what that kind is.

To the capable eye there is in the present condition of every man an index both to his past and to his future; from what we find him to be we may, if we are wise enough, infer both what he has been and what he will be.

There is a history in all men's lives,
Figuring the nature of the times deceased;
The which observed, a man may prophesy,
With a near aim, of the main chance of things
As yet not come to life.

On this principle all three of the Friends have acted; from his present miserable conditions they have both figured to themselves that, in times gone by, Job's life must have been an evil and a wicked one, and predicted that sooner or later it must provoke its appropriate punishment, that his "main chance as yet not come" was a very ominous one. In Chapter xviii., for instance, Bildad, seeing Job to be enmeshed in a net of calamity, had inferred that he had been thrust into it by his own sins, and that he could only be released from it by the punitive stroke of Death. And now Zophar pursues a similar course, but pursues it with a heat and virulence all his own. Bildad had said, "The wicked cannot always prosper—must at last come to a disastrous and shameful end."

"Yes," adds Zophar, "but the prosperity of the wicked is *only for a moment*, and the destruction which comes on him is *swift, sudden, overwhelming*." So that *he* touches Job closer home; for Job was still in the prime of his days, and the strokes by which he was being destroyed were, indeed, most sudden, unexpected, and severe. All the Friends take Job for a sinner; but Zophar takes him, first, for an epicure in sin (Verses 12 and 13), and then for an open, violent, and rapacious offender against the laws of man no less than against the laws of God (Verses 19-21); and declares that the terrible and ignominious end of all his greatness was simply the natural and inevitable outcome of his heinous and notorious crimes. Having to deal with a heretic, or at least a sceptic, *i.e.*, with one who declined to subscribe to his creed, he at once pronounces him a sinner above all men, and, as men of his type are apt to do, betakes himself to denunciation. He holds any divergence from his "views" to be a personal insult, and mistakes the passionate resentment of wounded vanity for the inspiration of religious zeal. According to him, not only had Job sinned, but, deeming retribution to be of halting and uncertain foot, he had thought to sin with impunity—thought himself so "far before" his sins that even "the swiftest wing of recompense" would fail to overtake him. But he had deceived himself; the wing of recompense had already overtaken him and struck him down. There was no escape for him. He had lost much already; he would soon lose all. The fire which had already kindled upon him, and had burned up well-nigh all that he possessed, would wholly devour him and consume whatever was still left in his tent (Verse 26), without so much as needing to be "blown," to be fanned and stimulated to its utmost fierceness.

And all this is conveyed in words and figures coarser and more vindictive than we find anywhere else in the Poem. Not only does Zophar speak his mind "with frank and with uncurbed plainness," he speaks it like one

whose bosom burns
With an incensed fire of injuries.

Although he is "furnished with no certainties," although he

proceeds wholly on the most questionable inferences and deductions, he treats Job with a “jeering and disdained contempt;” he seems to exult in the doom he denounces on him. Perhaps the most pitiless and venomous stroke in his oration is his attempt to crush down Job’s rising trust in the God who has so causelessly and profoundly afflicted him. Inspired by this trust, Job had appealed to Heaven, or rather to One in heaven, to bear witness to his innocence; and (in Verse 27) Zophar retorts that “the heavens will reveal,” not his innocence, but his “iniquity.” He had invoked earth as well as heaven to attest his innocence, by refusing to cover his blood; and Zophar mocks at his appeal, assuring him that the very “earth will rise up against him,” to condemn him.

Nothing could be more cruel, nothing more malignant even had Zophar but seen what he was doing. But, probably, he was far from seeing all that he was doing—did not realize that he was aiming at the very faith in God which God Himself was evoking in the heart of Job, though he surely must have felt that he was shutting on him the only door of hope. Except, indeed, for his scarcely veiled censure on Job, we must admit that his argument, though it “suited not in native colours with the truth” throughout, has a certain colour and measure of truth in it, and that the very intensity of the passion which breathes and burns in it gives it a certain eloquence and power. That every sin contains the seed of its own punishment, is true; but it is not true that every such seed matures and ripens within the limits of time. That some insolent and greedy sinners are suddenly overtaken by judgment, is true; but that all such offenders see their sins running before to judgment, is not true. While the latent charge and implication of the whole speech, that *Job* was a sinner so in love with sin that he could not be persuaded to let it go, that *he* was a man of an unbounded stomach, from whose greedy cravings nothing was safe, and that therefore his good fortune had not endured, were so plainly and monstrously untrue that, if Zophar’s nature had not been warped by theological preconceptions and inflamed with the heat of an affronted egotism, it was simply impossible that even he should have entertained the suspicion for a moment.

CHAPTER XX.

- 1.—*Then answered Zophar the Naamathite and said :*
2. *Nevertheless my thoughts urge me to answer,
 And the impulse that stirreth in me.*
3. *I have heard a chiding to my shame,
 But out of my understanding my spirit yieldeth me a reply.*
4. *Knowest thou not this, that, from of old,
 Since man was placed upon the earth,*
5. *The triumph of the wicked is brief,
 And the joy of the impious but for a moment ?*
6. *Though he lift himself up to the heavens,
 And his head sweep the clouds,*
7. *Yet shall he perish for ever like his own ordure :
 They that saw him shall say, " Where is he ? "*
8. *Like a dream shall he flit away and not be found,
 He shall be chased away like a vision of the night ;*
9. *The eye that saw him shall see him no more,
 Neither shall his place any more behold him :*
10. *His children shall court the poor,
 And his own hands shall restore their substance.*
11. *Though his bones are full of his youth,
 It shall lie down with him in the dust.*
12. *Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth,
 So that he retain it under his tongue,*
13. *So that he spareth it, yet will not leave it,
 But holdeth it still in his mouth,*
14. *Nevertheless his food is changed in his stomach,
 It is gall of asps within him ;*
15. *He swallowed down riches, and shall disgorge them,
 God will drive them out of his belly :*
16. *He sucked the poison of asps,
 The viper's tongue shall slay him.*
17. *He shall not see the brooks,
 The rivers, the torrents, of honey and cream ;*
18. *That for which he toiled he shall restore and not consume,
 Though large be his gain, he shall not have joy in it.*
19. *Because he ground down and abandoned the poor,
 Seized a house which he did not build—*
20. *Because his cravings knew no bounds,
 With none of his delights shall he escape*
21. *Nothing was safe from his greed,
 Therefore his good fortune shall not endure :*
22. *In the fulness of his abundance shall he be straitened ;*

- Trouble of every kind shall come upon him.*
23. *Let there be food to fill his belly,—
God shall cast on him the glow of his wrath,
And shall rain it upon him while he is feasting.*
24. *If he flee from a weapon of iron,
A bow of brass shall transfix him;*
25. *If one draw it out, and it come forth from his body,
And the gleaming point from his gall,
[New] terrors shall be upon him.*
26. *All darkness is hoarded in his treasures ;
A fire, not blown, shall devour him,
And feed on what is left in his tent :*
27. *The heavens shall reveal his iniquity,
And the earth rise up against him ;*
28. *The increase of his house shall depart,
Flowing away in the day of his anger.*
29. *This is the portion of the wicked from God,
And this the heritage ordained him of the Lord.*

Verses 2 and 3.—Zophar's opening words are not very clear. He is evidently, and confessedly, agitated and perturbed ; and for this reason. In the First Colloquy (Chap. xi. 6), he had warned Job that he was so great a sinner, that even his great misery was not an adequate punishment of his guilt. He had urged him to confess and renounce his sin, promising him that so soon as he could lift up a face without spot to God his misery would give way to all prosperous and happy conditions. And how has "Sir Oracle" been met? Instead of gratefully accepting his warning and invitation, and acting on them ; instead of saying—

My voice shall sound as you do prompt mine ear,
And I will stoop and humble my intents
To your well-practised wise directions,

Job has actually rejected his counsel, refuted the hypothesis upon which it was based, asserted and reasserted that he needed no repentance, and even appealed with apparent sincerity and confidence from Zophar's verdict to the judgment and sentence of God ! How could any man, or any such man as Zophar, with the whole weight of orthodox opinion at his back, stand *that* ? It was impossible that he should sit silent while the most ancient and approved conclusions were being so

wickedly called in question. It was still more impossible that he should hold his peace when opinions which *he* had espoused were mercilessly refuted, and counsels which *he* had deigned to offer were flung back into his face. He *must* speak, though he hardly knows what to say. Nay, to his own amazement, he finds that he has nothing of any real moment to say; and therefore he very naturally proceeds to abuse his adversary. Before, he had besought Job to repent; but now he finds in him

such black and grainéd spots
As will not leave their tinct,

let him repent as he may. With an insolence almost incredible to Zophar, Job had even threatened *him*, the very pink and pattern of orthodoxy, with the sword and judgment of God (Chapter xix. 29). It was intolerable. Job must be silenced; but how? That was not so easy to determine. And so, in an excited yet pompous way, hiding the poverty of his invention under a cloak of big words, and yet revealing his consciousness of wounded vanity and outraged piety in the very words behind which he would fain conceal it, he begins.

Nevertheless, despite all you have said, and said with such intolerable confidence and presumption, *my thoughts*—the word for “thoughts” is a peculiar one, used only here and in Chapter iv. Verse 13, and means “doubtful, perplexed, agitated thoughts”—*urge me to answer*. The whole line implies that there was a tempest in his soul, that he was driven to and fro by contending impulses which he could not control, and hardly knew for what point to steer. And this impression of blind, hasty, undirected force is strengthened by the words that follow, in which he confesses that a violent “impulse” is at work within him.

In the next Verse he adds new strokes to this unconscious delineation of the trouble and agitation of his spirit. *I have heard a chiding to my shame; i.e.*, “I know very well what the aim of the check and counter-check of your last words was. You intended that threatening of judgment for *me*. You meant to put *me* to shame. But you did not, and cannot, put me to shame, nor even put me to silence. In my “under-

standing" there is an immense store of arguments, if only I could get at them; and "out of" this store "my spirit" will select that which I deem most pertinent and conclusive. If I am for a moment embarrassed, and know not what to say, it is simply my wealth of replies which embarrasses me.

These are brave words, but rich men do not boast of their wealth. And I am afraid that Zophar must either have been much poorer than he thought, or that he put forward this pretension of wealth to hide a conscious penury. For, after all, he has nothing to say—nothing of the quality of an argument, or of a reply to the arguments of Job. To him, as to many of the self-appointed champions of subsequent creeds, the most familiar weapon of controversy was invective; and his one merit is that he makes his invective as keen and biting as he can. There is really nothing but racy and telling invective in the Verses which follow; and one might have hoped that men of so much religious culture and genuine piety as Eliphaz and Bildad would have been a little ashamed of their colleague's irrational and self-defeating virulence. But just as we now often see good men, who would not themselves deign to use sinister and cruel weapons against the heretic or the sceptic, not altogether displeased when combatants of a coarser grain wield those weapons with effect; just as we occasionally see them, in times of great excitement, even stooping to use the weapons they would have disdained to touch in their calmer and better hours; so, as we shall find in the next Colloquy, even Eliphaz, the wisest of the three Friends, sinks to the level of Zophar, and stoops to invectives as baseless and cruel, though not so grossly worded as his.

There is not much in Zophar's invective to detain us. It divides itself into three sections. In the first (Verses 4–11) he describes the punishments which wait on sin; in the second (Verses 12–22) he affirms these punishments to be the natural and necessary consequences of the sins to which they are attached; and in the third (Verses 23–28) he asserts that these punishments, though they are the natural consequences of sin, are nevertheless inflicted by God, and execute his verdict on the transgressions by which they are provoked.

In *Verse 4* he affirms the constancy, the eternity, of the

retributive principle which he is about to assert, viz., that (*Verse 5*) the success and prosperity of the wicked man are short-lived. The higher and the more imposing the elevation to which he climbs (*Verse 6*), the more disastrous and disgraceful is his fall from it (*Verse 7*). The coarse figure which Zophar here employs—"like his own ordure"—was probably suggested by the *mezbele* on which Job lay; and implies that Job himself, whose head had once seemed to sweep the clouds, had already fallen from his high estate, and become as loathsome as that on which he lay. So sudden and so unexpected is the downfall of the sinner, so complete and obliterating the Divine judgment on him, that men will look round for him in amazement, asking, "Where is he?" all his imposing bulk and grandeur having vanished like the pageantry of a dream (*Verse 8*). *Verse 9* is stolen bodily from Job, and was doubtless meant as a broad hint that it *was* Job whom Zophar, under the thin disguise of a general description, had in view. Job had said (Chap. vii. 8, 10), "*The eye that seeth me shall see me no more;*" and again, virtually, "*Neither shall my place know me any more:*" and Zophar now says of his wicked man, "*The eye that saw him shall see him no more, Neither shall his place any more behold him,*"—this echo being also an innuendo. In *Verse 10*, as if feeling that he was too openly breaking through his disguise, too plainly christening his wicked man *Job*, Zophar adds a more abstract and general touch to his delineation: "His children shall court the poor," *i.e.*, they will have to court the favour of those whom *he* has impoverished, restoring to them what his rapacious hands have seized. And as Job's children were all dead, we might think that here at least Zophar was not girding at *him*: but the words which follow betray him. He cannot keep his secret for two sentences together, nor even for two clauses of the same sentence. For his wicked man, he adds, shall restore the substance of which he had plundered his neighbours *with his own hands*. And incredible as it may appear that he who knew the just and noble manner of Job's life so well should intend to charge him with having made raids on the neighbouring clans, and should have held, therefore, that the inroads of the Sabceans and Chasdim who had "lifted" his oxen and camels were only

a due retribution, there can be little doubt in the mind of any student of Verses 19-21, 24, 25, that he had persuaded himself that Job was, or was like, the raiding freebooter whom he there describes. In the very next verse, indeed (*Verse 11*), there is a distinct allusion to Job's complaint (*Chap. xiii. 26*), that God was making him "to inherit the sins of his youth." "Yes," retorts Zophar, "your youth, or the sin of your youth, *has* come back upon you; nor need you think to escape it: it shall go down with you into the dust of death."

In the next section of the Chapter (Verses 12-22) Zophar proceeds to affirm that the destruction of the wicked man—that convenient cloak or figment behind which all the Friends stab at Job in turn—is purely natural and retributive, that it is due to and provoked by his sins. But here, again, all the Commentators are agreed that Zophar is animated by a coarseness and fierceness such as we find in no other of the interlocutors in this tragedy. The Poet is consistent in attributing this intolerant heat and passion to him alone. And yet, in *Verses 12-15*, we have a veritable touch of the Poet himself, who, like Shakespeare, is apt at times to speak through the personages of his drama. The way in which the figure of these Verses is elaborated is in his most characteristic manner,¹ and the figure itself might fairly be taken as an illustration of the way in which he lingers over any simile that takes his fancy, holding it in his mouth, and refusing to part with it till he has extracted the last possibility of virtue or sweetness from it. The image of the Verses is, of course, that of an epicure with a dainty on his palate, bent on making the most of it—not a pleasant figure, though it is touched in with wonderful skill. Job, or Job's double, "the wicked man," is the epicure; sin is the dainty, which he loves so well that he holds it under his tongue, touching it and yet sparing it, loth to leave it, and still more loth to exhaust its flavours, only swallowing it unwillingly, and when he can no longer relish it. But no sooner has he swallowed it than, as dainties are apt to do, it turns to poison within him, so that he is compelled to vomit it up again. And the special sin which Zophar assumes to have been so perilously sweet to him was—the lust of

¹ See Note on Chapter xv. Verse 10, with footnote.

wealth, a charge for which there was absolutely no foundation except that Job had been a wealthy man, too wealthy, perhaps, for the greedy eyes of his Friend; for then, as now, even good men were apt to admire riches and to covet them.

That Zophar *was* touched by this base admiration and craving seems indicated in *Verse 17*, in which he employs the usual metaphor for Paradisaical happiness, streams of milk and honey, to denote the enjoyments which even an ill-gotten wealth may procure—a profanation of the metaphor which we should not have expected from him, for he is sound in creed, if not in heart. In a series of conspicuously vigorous sentences he continues to affirm that even this sin carries its own punishment with it; that wealth ill-gotten *cannot* be enjoyed; and that, therefore, 'tis better to have modest and lowly aims,—

And range with humble livers in content,
Than to be perked up in a glistening grief,
And wear a golden sorrow.

In the third section of the Chapter (Verses 23-28) he proceeds to assert that the action of this law of retribution is not automatic, though it looks as if it were; that it does not administer itself, but is administered by God. All the forces of Nature array themselves against the greedy, rapacious, insatiable sinner, and all the instincts and interests of men; but it is God who rules these forces, and God who has so made men, and so guides and directs them, that they resent wrongdoing, and pull down the wrong-doer from his pride of place. Even though the sinner may for a moment have compassed the good fortune at which he aimed, yet at the very moment he is revelling in it God will shower upon him a hot wrath and vengeance by which he shall be consumed (*Verse 23*). Such, implies Zophar, had been Job's fate, when he was struck from the very summit of prosperity and happy hours to the depths of ruin and despair.

In *Verses 24-27* he grows at once more definite and more harsh. For here he depicts Job under the image of a free-booter, slain in a foray against some neighbouring clan. Bent on plunder, he is suddenly confronted with the sword of his purposed victim; he flees from it, only to be transfixed by an

arrow : a comrade draws it out, but his life-blood follows the sharp gleaming point, and he falls and dies. And the treasure, the booty, which he had carefully buried in the ground or concealed in his tent *before* he set out on his last expedition, will remain concealed, hidden in darkness, until it is consumed either by a chance fire, a fire not kindled and blown and fed by men, or by the fire which God hurls at it from heaven.

But in *Verse 27*, as I have already said, we have the culminating point of Zophar's cruelty. What he most resents is that one who dissents from his views, and is not pious after his pattern, should claim to have a deeper faith than he has, a firmer assurance of the Divine favour. He is conscious that Job feels himself to be both the wiser and the better man of the two, with wider thoughts and a heart more devout, nearer God and with a more invincible conviction of God's good-will toward him. Possibly he half suspects that Job *is* the wiser and the better man. And yet how can that be, when Zophar has authority, tradition, the popular creed and sympathy, all on his side? It cannot be. Job must be mistaken; his wisdom must be "consumed in confidence;" his faith must be presumptuous, if not insincere. Is it for such a one as he to appeal to heaven and earth to attest his innocence? No, verily. Innocent he cannot be. He must be the greedy and violent sinner whom Zophar has pictured to himself. Let him appeal as he will, then, Heaven will but attest his iniquity, not his integrity, and the earth rise up against him, as unwilling to endure the presence of one so vile. And so he strikes at the one consolation left to his afflicted friend—the nascent trust in God born of his very despair. No day of mercy is about to dawn upon him, no day of redemption and vindication; but (*Verse 28*) a day of anger, in which all that he has hoarded up will flow away under the tempest of God's righteous indignation.

In fine, we may say of Zophar that this last oration of his proves him to be one of that vast but foolish multitude who

choose by show,
Not learning more than the fond eye doth teach;
Which pries not to the interior, but, like the martlet,

Builds in the weather on the outward wall,
Even in the force and road of casualty.

His theology is superficial; his view of human life is superficial; and, above all, his view of Job is superficial, and not even true to the superficies of his character. He "pries not to the interior," whether of character or of events. Being so slight and shallow a man, it was but natural both that he should take it upon himself to interpret the ways of God with men, and that he should misinterpret them. It was but natural that, his interpretation being questioned and refuted, he should blaze out into wrath and denunciation, hanging out his little hoard of maxims and menaces on the outward wall, from which casualty and the weather have long since dislodged them.

Perhaps, too, as Zophar is the last of the Friends to speak in this Colloquy, we ought to note, before dismissing him, how artistically the Poet throughout this Colloquy wins our sympathies away from the other speakers to fix them on the hero of his drama. While a spring of ever new thought, and thought surcharged with the most various and profound emotion, is constantly welling up from the heart of Job, and he is borne on by it to the most surprising and invaluable discoveries, the Friends have but one thought among them all—retribution, and but one emotion—indignation. They are for ever harping on one string, for ever singing one song, till we grow weary both of their strain and of them. The only change in them is that they so handle their one thought as that it grows narrower and still more untrue to experience every time they take it up; that they sing their one song in an ever louder and harsher note. All the life, the variety, the progress of the drama is concentrated in Job; and thus, silently and indirectly, but most effectually, our entire sympathy with him is secured.

6. JOB TO ZOPHAR.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN his last speech Job had risen to a clear and firm conviction of a retributive life beyond the grave. But this new and sustaining conviction was based on a prior conviction, at which also he had only newly arrived, a conviction which was still strange and terrible to him, viz., that *this* life was not, as he had always conceived it to be, a purely retributive one. Like the Friends, he had long taken it for granted that, under the rule of a just and righteous God, righteousness must invariably result in prosperity and happiness, unrighteousness in calamity and misery. His own unmerited losses and pains and griefs had constrained him to question this traditional and accepted dogma, however; and, to his consternation, no sooner did he attempt to verify it, than he found it to be untrue alike to the facts of his own experience, and to facts which he had many times observed in the life and experience of other men. Heretofore he had not paused to consider what these facts signified, or how they bore on his narrow and inadequate interpretation of the mystery of Providence. The facts had, so to speak, lain in one compartment of his brain, and the dogma which professed to interpret them in another, with no link of connection between them. His own undeserved sufferings had now supplied the missing link; and no sooner is the connection established than the dogma grows incredible to him. He had been wont to argue—God is just, and therefore his providence must be just; the laws by which He governs the lives of men must bring good to the good and evil to the evil. Now, he argues—God is just, and therefore his providence must be just; but, as facts prove that He does not reward every man according to his deeds in this life, there must be a future life in which the work of his providence will run to its proper retributive close.

It is this new and larger conviction which gives form and colour to the thoughts recorded in the Chapter before us. True, he does not once utter that assured hope of a life beyond

the grave which found such splendid expression in the closing Verses of Chapter xix. But, as I have just said, that hope was based on the conviction that the present life is not strictly and adequately retributive; and it is *this* conviction, still new and strange to his mind, on which his thoughts now work, seeking to define and formulate it. So that if, for the present, he says nothing more of the great hope which had brought light into his darkness, if he seems to sink to a lower level of meditation, *he sinks only to the level on which his hope rests; he is at work on the basis on which it stands*, making it more solid and strong. If, therefore, we would do him justice, we must not conceive of him as lapsing from his hope into his old mood of scepticism and despair, but, rather, as building and buttressing up the foundation on which that hope stands, in order that it may stand the more squarely and securely.

To this task, indeed, he had been summoned by the invective of Zophar. For Zophar had reduced the retributive dogma, now discarded by Job, but still held by the Friends, to its narrowest point, and had given it its sharpest and most incisive edge. According to him, men not only received the due reward of their sins within the limits of this present life; they received it instantly, strikingly, universally, so that no man could miss seeing it, so that even the veriest sceptic could not question the fact. Challenged in this bold and formal way, the very ground of his new hope being thus rudely struck from under it, Job for the first time boldly and formally argues that the wicked do *not* suffer an instant reward of their wickedness; nay, that so far as the eye of man can trace them, they often altogether outstrip the pursuing vengeance. Hitherto, when they had painted the wicked man and his doom, he had been content, since he knew whom they meant, to assert that *he* was not wicked, and to lament that, though innocent, he was being treated as if he were guilty. If now and then he had flashed out without a doubt (*cf.* Chap. ix. 22-24) as to whether their hypothesis were true in so far as the wicked were concerned, if he had consistently denied its truth in so far as the upright were concerned, he had never yet confronted the assertion that the wicked get their due in this world with formal denial and reasoned disproof. But now that Zophar

has declared that assertion to be invariably and conspicuously true, he meets it front to front, both with flat denial and with an appeal to known and admitted facts of human experience. First, in Verses 7-16, he affirms, as a fact familiar to all candid observers, that wicked men *do* prosper. Then, in Verses 17-21, he affirms that they are *not* invariably punished—punished by a constant and inviolable law. So that he meets Zophar's assertion on both sides, the positive and the negative, affirming that at least some wicked men prosper to the very end of their days, and denying, therefore, that they are overwhelmed by instant calamity. *These are the facts*, whatever Zophar and his colleagues think they ought to be. And (Verses 22-26) why should they assume to be wiser than God, to impose their conjectural dogmas on Him, and seek to wrest his providence and the facts of it from their true significance? Finally, in Verses 27-34, he tells them plainly that though they still choose to wear a mask, to talk of "the wicked man" when they mean him, and so

with forged quaint conceit
To set a gloss upon their bold intent,

he knows whom they mean well enough, and sees clean through their flimsy disguise. Nay, though he so far responds to their method of disguise as himself to carry on his argument in the general and abstract terms which they affect, they are not to suppose that he does not resent the "surmises" by which they wrong him, the gross unfounded charges which Zophar has all but openly alleged against him. He is quite aware that he is the wicked person, the greedy Epicurean sinner, the tyrant and freebooter, described in his last speech. Nor, while he thus confounds Zophar, is he unmindful of the arguments adduced in this Colloquy by Eliphaz and Bildad. They, as we have seen, had backed up the thesis common to all the Friends by an appeal to the ancestral wisdom of the Arab clans, and by proverbs still current among them. And from the conclusion supported by the ancient and current wisdom of a single race, Job appeals (Verses 29-33) to the wisdom gathered from many races by "men of travel." The *universal* verdict was against them, though they might snatch a verdict from the proverbs and traditions of this race or that.

On the whole, then, we may say that in his closing speech, while he steadily pursues his own line of thought, Job nevertheless replies to all the speakers in this Second Colloquy, and disposes of all the arguments or assertions they have brought against him.

CHAPTER XXI.

1. *Then answered Job and said :*
2. *Give good heed to my discourse,*
 And let this be the consolation you afford me :
3. *Suffer me that I may speak,*
 And, after I have spoken, mock on.
4. *As for me, was my complaint of man ?*
 And wherefore should I not be impatient ?
5. *Look on me and be astonished,*
 And lay hand upon mouth.
6. *Even as I think upon it I am perturbed,*
 And trembling taketh hold on my flesh.
7. *Wherefore do the wicked live on,*
 Wax old, and become mighty in power ?
8. *Their seed are established in their sight,*
 And their offspring before their eyes ;
9. *Their homes are free from fear,*
 And no scourge of God is upon them :
10. *Their bull engendereth and doth not fail,*
 Their cow calveth and doth not miscarry ;
11. *They send forth their little ones like a flock,*
 And their children skip for joy ;
12. *They rise up to the timbrel and harp,*
 And rejoice at the sound of the pipe :
13. *They wear away their days in mirth,*
 And go down to Hades in a moment :
14. *Yet they say to God, " Depart from us,*
 For we take no pleasure in the knowledge of thy ways ;
15. *What is the Almighty that we should serve Him,*
 And what will it profit us if we make our suit unto Him ? "
16. *Mark, their prosperity is not in their own hand.*
 Far from me be the counsel of the wicked !
17. *How seldom is the lamp of the wicked put out,*
 And how rarely doth their destruction come upon them,
 The woes He apportioneth in his anger,

18. *That they should become like straw before the blast,
And as chaff which the storm whirleth away !*
19. *" God layeth up his iniquity for his children !"
Let Him requite it on him, that he may feel it :*
20. *His own eye should behold his calamity,
And he himself should drink the wrath of the Almighty :*
21. *For what careth he for his house after him
When the number of his months is cut short ?*
22. *Shall a man teach God knowledge,
When it is He who shall judge the highest ?*
23. *One dieth in his full strength,
Wholly at ease and tranquil ;*
24. *His loins are full of fat,
And his bones are moist with marrow :*
25. *And another dieth with bitter soul,
And hath never tasted good :*
26. *Yet, alike, they lie down in the dust,
And the worms cover them both.*
27. *Behold, I know your thoughts
And the surmises by which ye wrong me !*
28. *For ye say, " Where is the tyrant's house,
And where the tent in which the wicked abide ?"*
29. *Have ye never questioned with men of travel ?
And know ye not their tokens ?*
30. *" That the wicked is spared in the day of calamity,
In the day when wrath cometh on ;*
31. *Who careth to tell him of his ways to his face,
And who will requite him for what he hath done ?*
32. *He is borne to the tomb with pomp,
And watch is kept over his pile ;*
33. *Sweet to him are the clods of the valley :
And he shall draw every man after him,
As they are innumerable who went before him."*
34. *How, then, can ye comfort me with that which is vain ?
For your answers are still full of deceit.*

Verse 2.—The Friends, so far from being able to solve the problem by which Job's mind and heart are racked, do not even see that there is any problem to be solved. That which perplexes and agonizes him is simple and plain to them. He is a sinner, and therefore he suffers ; a great sinner, and therefore he suffers greatly. As they can neither help him to solve

the problem which tasks his labouring thoughts, nor give him the comfort which springs from sympathy and friendship, he asks, as the only poor semblance of consolation they can afford him—for had they not come expressly to “condole with him and comfort him”?—that they should listen to him with attention (*cf.* Chap. xiii. 5). Not (*Verse* 3) that he expects to convince them; probably they will remain of the same opinion still, and resume the invective to which he has just listened: his only comfort will be that of having “delivered his soul,” of having spoken out his whole mind. They may well listen to him; for (*Verse* 4) his complaint was not of men such as themselves. The *differentia* of it, that which distinguished it from the complaints of other mourners, was that he was neither bemoaning the injustice which he had met with from men, nor imploring the pity of men. His complaint mounted higher, and struck at the very throne and providence of God. His mind was occupied, preoccupied, with a mystery so great and impenetrable that he could not stoop to the petty resentments and petty cravings of those in whose minds suffering quickened no questions of vital and transcendent moment. No wonder he was “impatient” with them, with the thoughts and surmises with which they wronged him, and wronged him most of all because they did not touch the problem at which he was labouring, because they never once rose to the level along which he was sounding his dim and perilous way. They themselves (*Verse* 5) if they would look on him aright, and see what the enigma was which he was striving to penetrate, would be no less astonished and perturbed than he was; they would feel that he stood on a height, and facing a mystery, which might well dizzy and appal him. The apparent, the undeniable, injustice of God’s dealings with men—*this* was the mystery with which he stood confronted, the problem he had set himself to solve, the frowning and precipitous height which he must either scale or perish. Bold and desperate as he was (*Verse* 6), he could not so much as think of his perilous enterprise without being perturbed afresh, till he trembled under the weight of it. Eliphaz had trembled and quaked when the oracular Shape, or Spirit, came to teach him what he had never doubted, that God was more just than man. But what

was his terror compared to that of Job, who had to address himself to a far profounder problem, unaided whether by man or spirit?

In Verses 7–16 he states this problem on its positive side, so states it as to traverse Zophar's argument at every point and turn. The problem is that (*Verse 7*), though a just God is in heaven, the wicked live and thrive, live on to old age, and thrive till they become a power in the earth. Nor (*Verse 8*) is their prosperity confined to themselves; they transmit it to their children, whom they see established about them before they die—a point-blank contradiction of all three of the Friends, since Eliphaz had said (Chap. xv. 34), "The household of the impure shall be desolate;" Bildad (Chap. xviii. 19), "He shall have neither offshoot nor offspring;" and Zophar (Chap. xx. 10), "His children shall fawn upon the poor." At least two of the Friends are contradicted again in *Verse 9*, for Bildad (Chap. xviii. 15) had spoken of the habitation of the sinner as sprinkled with brimstone, and Zophar (Chap. xx. 26) as consumed with fire; whereas Job declares that no doom falls upon it from Heaven. All goes well with him, indeed, and with his household (*Verses 10–12*). His flocks multiply in peace, neither smitten by lightning nor carried off by roving clans; his children are numerous as a flock, and circle round him with dance and song: and here the third Friend, Eliphaz, is contradicted; for he had declared (Chap. xv. 29) both that the sinner should never be rich, and (Chap. xv. 32, 33) that he should not live out half his days. So impressed is Job, in his ruin and misery, with the tranquillity and joyousness of the life vouchsafed to the godless man whom he had in his eye, that he paints an ideal portrait of him in these Verses, and makes him the central figure of a pastoral and idyllic scene. And when at last nature gives way (*Verse 13*), when the pastoral comes to a close, and the music is hushed, and the dancing feet are still, he dies "in a moment," without a pang—not languishing through a lingering agony, as Job was doing, but going straight down into the under-world, without struggle, or pain, or any sign of the Divine displeasure. We who pray against "sudden death" need to be reminded that it is often a blessing. Not without reason Job regards it as the crowning

benediction of a happy and prosperous life.¹ And yet (*Verses* 14, 15) this man who enjoyed his life to the full, and to the last, and then lapsed from it in an instant, on whose head, therefore, every possible blessing seemed to be accumulated, was one of those who did not delight in God, nor care to have Him in any of their thoughts; one of those who had strenuously put Him out of their thoughts, because they had no pleasure in his ways; one of those to whom the knowledge of God, and fellowship with God, and the service of God, were alike distasteful, unprofitable, repugnant. *This* was the wonder of it; it was *this* which made the problem so dark and insoluble. For (*Verse* 16) the prosperity of the men who hate God is not "in their own hand." It is *God* who gives it to them. The more Job thinks of it, the more the wonder grows. That *the godless* should live and thrive, live long and happily, and rise to power, and transmit their standing and wealth to their children; that *they* should bask in the sunshine of peaceful and happy days, their eyes following with keen delight the merry dances of their children, and should at last pass suddenly into the world of spirits, unracked by any pain, overtaken by no calamity; and that it should be *God* who metes out to the godless a life so sweet, and a death so much to be desired—all this, as we can tell from the way in which he lingers over every detail of it, makes up a problem, a mystery, which fairly staggers him; it is unintelligible to him, undecipherable, a living and dazzling hieroglyph to which he has no key.

And yet, tranquil and prosperous though they be, and though their prosperity be of God, Job will have none of it; the unbending firmness of his upright soul will not stoop to happiness on terms so base. He rejects it with an accent of horror and repugnance in the words, "*Far from me be the counsel of the wicked!*" For these words compose an Oriental formula of aversion and deprecation, such as we meet with

¹ The Hebrews were not alone in their preference of a quick and painless death.' The Greeks shared it with them. Thus the Chorus in the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus (translated by Lord Carnarvon) sing:—

Would that without the pang of pain, or fret of slow disease,
Swift death might come with endless sleep, and bring me ease.

again and again in the Coran,¹ such as is frequent on the lips of the Arabs to this day. Eliphaz repeats it in the next Colloquy (Chap. xxii. 18). But on Job's lips it has a strange force. What he means by it is, "Better do well and suffer for it, than do ill and prosper by it." Even though the wicked are *not* punished for their iniquity, and he himself *is* chastened for his integrity, he would not be as they are. It is a horror to him even to think of sharing their character and fate.

Now it is impossible to place this picture of the wicked man side by side with those which each of the Friends has painted, or, rather, with the one picture which each of them has successively touched with broader strokes of caricature, without recognizing the vast difference between them; without feeling that *they* had made their portrait of him as like Job as they dared, while *he* had made it as unlike himself as he could; without suspecting that the man himself is exaggerated in both pictures, and that the background of circumstance and condition sketched in is as much out of scale as the man himself. The wicked man, as a rule, is neither the doomed monster of the Friends nor the joyous and idyllic personage of Job. Nor is there only one type of wicked man in the world. There are many, and their fates are as various and strangely blended as the types to which they conform. We must remember, therefore, that Job and the Friends are *arguing* with each other, not in our modern, Western, syllogistic way, but in the pictorial and parabolic method of the unchanging East. These pictures are not meant simply as pictures, and hence they are not strictly and accurately true. *They are also meant to convey the facts on which the disputants rely, and the arguments which they deduce from them.* What the Friends mean by their overstrained delineations is, "You, Job, are a wicked man, and therefore you suffer." What Job means is, "I am not in the least like a wicked man, although I suffer; nor is it true that all wicked men suffer an instant punishment for their sins." The ultimate law of Greek art,

¹ Such a formula will be found in Sura lxxvii., *The Sent* ("Woe to those who on that day are charged with imposture!"), repeated no less than ten times; *i.e.*, it composes no less than ten out of the fifty Verses of the Chapter.

"Nothing in extremes," was by no means a canon of Hebrew art; and therefore we need not be surprised to meet these exaggerated delineations wherever the exigencies of argument or of emphasis demanded them.

In Verses 17-21 Job proceeds with the negative side of the argument. Having shewn that the wicked often enjoy their prosperity to the last, he denies that they are soon and suddenly requited for their transgressions, as Zophar and Bildad had affirmed they were. In *Verse* 17 he opens with a phrase of some subtlety as to its form, though its sense is quite plain. Literally rendered, his words would be, "How *often*," instead of "How *seldom*," "is the lamp of the wicked put out!" But this "how often" is one of those ironical idioms found in all the superior languages; it is either an ironical exclamation or an ironical interrogation, and means precisely the opposite of what it seems to affirm. Exclamation or interrogation, there is no doubt that Job is here answering what the Friends have been preaching at him, Zophar in Chapter xx., Bildad in Chapter xviii., and contends that the wicked man very rarely suffers what they had maintained to be his common lot. The opening line of the Verse, indeed, is a direct quotation from Bildad (Chap. xviii. 5); the word "destruction" in the second line is probably taken from the twelfth Verse of the same Chapter (xviii.); and as the word rendered "woes" in the third line *may* mean "snares," it may contain a reference to the famous Net passage in Bildad's oration (Chap. xviii. 8-10), in which he so variously represents the punishment of the sinner as "a divinely-decreed seizure." The wicked man may now and then, Job admits (*Verse* 18), be swept away like chaff, or like chopped straw, by a tempest of retribution; but such moral tempests are rare; they do not happen every day, nor fall on the head of every sinner. In *Verse* 19 he quotes a saying from the lips of the Friends, or, rather, a sentiment to which they had given frequent expression, from the first speech of Eliphaz (Chap. v. 4) to the last of Zophar (Chap. xx. 10), viz. that God punishes the guilt of the godless, if not on the ungodly man himself, at least in his children; but he quotes it only to repudiate it (*Verses* 20, 21).

This transfer of punishment from the guilty to the innocent he holds to be a violation of all law, an invasion of moral freedom, a defeat of the very ends of moral discipline. Not only did it reduce the law of retribution to an arbitrary and uncertain caprice; it deprived the sinner himself of the only chastisement he was capable of feeling, and by which he might possibly be corrected. A godless man is a selfish man, a

fool whose sense can feel no more
But his own wringing.

What cares he for that which may come after he himself has once slipped from the scene? If he is to be made to feel his guilt, he must be compelled to drain the cup of calamity with his own lips.

In the third paragraph of his Speech (Verses 22-26) Job insists on the inequality of death, as he had before insisted on the inequity of life. It is the very equality of death which makes it unequal. In life the several fortunes of the good and the bad are not determined by their respective characters, as they ought to be if the contention of the Friends were true; and in death one indiscriminate fate befalls them both. He opens the section (*Verse 22*) with a gird at the Friends. According to their theory, virtue and happiness, vice and misery, are correlatives. But that theory was inconsistent with some of the commonest facts of human life. Did they shrug their shoulders, as who should say, "So much the worse for the facts"? or did they wilfully close their eyes to facts at variance with their hypothesis? But *that* was to affect a higher wisdom than that of God Himself. His voice, his will, the principles on which He ruled men, were expressed in facts. Would they venture to set their conception of what ought to be against their perception of what was, and so judge Him who judges "the highest"? these "highest" being either the real highest, the spirits nearest to God's throne, or the pretended highest, *i.e.* the men who affected to impose their petty theories on Him, and to prescribe the laws by which He was bound to govern the world.

In the subsequent Verses (*Verses* 23–26) Job states in a pictorial form some of the facts which the theory of his Friends did not cover, and could not be stretched to cover. It is almost impossible to read these Verses, and to consider his description of the typical bad man and the typical good man, without being reminded of our Lord's parable of Dives and Lazarus, in which Job's two men are reproduced, and the problem which taxed his thoughts receives a solution that would probably have satisfied *him*, though it only sets us on asking questions that go even deeper than his. For a retributive life in Hades, in which the defective recompenses of this present life will be redressed and completed, seems to have been the very conviction at which he had arrived, and in which he felt that he could rest. But what he does here is simply to turn on the Friends, and demand where, in the two representative cases which he had sketched, was their law of immediate and invariable retribution? Here were exceptions to it—grave, frequent, notorious exceptions: what could they make of these?

At last (*Verses* 27–34) Job comes to speak of himself, and of the wrong done him by the Friends. Even though he is simply confronting their theory with the commonest and most undeniable facts of experience, he knows (*Verse* 27) how they will misinterpret him, knows that, while he is speaking, they both regard him as himself an evil-doer, and believe that that is why he is so anxious to prove that evil-doers often escape the punishment they have deserved. He infers their present unfounded "surmises" from the charges they have already alleged against him. Had they not again and again described *him* under the thin disguise they had thrown over their delineations of the wicked man? Had not Zophar, in his last speech, denounced him as a violent and rapacious tyrant (*Verse* 28), from whose greed nothing was safe, and who had been smitten down in the midst of his robberies and oppressions? His answer to the wicked surmises by which they wrong him is simple and direct. The facts which he has adduced in proof of the frequent and undisturbed prosperity of the evil-doer are *not* adduced with a view to justify him-

self. How can they be when (*Verse 29*) they were the commonplaces of all men of wide observation and experience? What was the constant report of those who had seen many races and many lands, when they were called upon for their "tokens," i.e. for the proofs that they had travelled, for the most memorable incidents which they had witnessed, and the most valuable reflections which their "extensive view" had suggested to them? Did it not confirm all that he had said of the exemption of the wicked from the stroke of calamity in life, and of their being accorded a happy and honourable death? Were they not for ever telling of great and godless tyrants, lapped in wealth and luxury to old age, and then laid in mausoleums which were the wonder and admiration of all who beheld them? Did not their testimony, then, refute the allegation of Zophar, that the wicked are swept away by a sudden torrent of calamity, all remembrance of them perishing from the face of the earth?

The report of these observant and reflective travellers is given, as from their own lips, in *Verses 30-33*. The godless despot, they say, is secure in life, because no man dare accuse him to his face, or is able to requite him as he deserves. And, so far from being forgotten, he is remembered and honoured in his death, a stately tomb being reared over his dust, and the common lot of man being "made sweet to him by the pageantry of his burial and his after fame;" for then, as now, the great mausoleums on which the resources of art and wealth were lavished too often commemorated the name and fame of tyrants, who were thus kept in remembrance when wiser and better men than they, the benefactors instead of the oppressors of the race, were forgotten out of mind. The phrase in *Verse 32*, "*And watch is kept over his pile*," if it means anything more than the care with which the grave of the despot was guarded, as in India and Egypt, or the curses invoked on all who should disturb the dust of the dead, which may still be read on the surviving tombs of Phœnicia and Greece, is capable of two interpretations. It may refer to the custom of Egypt, where a statue of the dead man was sometimes erected on the lid of his sarcophagus; or it may refer to the Arab custom of building a mound over the grave

of a dead but honoured chieftain, or placing it on an eminence, in order that even in death he might be surrounded by the huts of his clan, and be still able, as it were, to overlook their encampment—"keeping watch from his pile." If we must see such an allusion to ancient custom in the words, and choose between the customs of Arabia and Egypt, I should prefer the latter; partly because we have already met at least one clear reference to the sepulchral customs of Egypt in the Poem (Chapter iii. 13-15), and partly because the Hebrew word here rendered "pile" is all but identical with an Egyptian word which means "sarcophagus." But, however we take this allusion, the sense of the passage is clear: Job insists on the funereal and monumental pomp accorded to the godless tyrant after his death, in order to refute Bildad's assertion that he left no trace or memorial behind him.

Verse 34.—The arguments of the Friends, therefore, are shewn to be baseless, their theory does not cover the facts it professes to cover. Stripped of all artifice and disguise, reduced to its ultimate principle, to its true value, there remains in their endeavour to make him out an evil-doer against the testimony of his own conscience, nothing but vanity and deceit, nothing but a base attempt to curry favour with God by covering their friend with an obloquy he has done nothing to provoke.

If we now look back across the whole of this Second Colloquy, we cannot but admit that it marks a decided and a large advance in the action of the drama. Even the Friends pass on to "a more removed ground," a ground farther removed from their starting-point than any they attained in the course of the First Colloquy. They make a real advance, although they make it only by abandoning a position they can no longer defend, and concentrating their force on a more limited range; for there is true progress in the conduct of any argument when the circle of thought, almost sure to be too wide at first, is narrowed in, when it is confined to the necessary and vital points. By abandoning their attempt to justify all the ways of God with men, good as well as bad, and by limiting their contention to the law of retribution in

so far as it enters into the lot of the wicked, they shew that they have no wish

To feed contention in a lingering act,

nor to run many a mile about when they may reach their end a nearer way.

The change in their tone—*advance* it may be called, in a certain wry and discreditable sense—is even more marked than that of their argument. There is more passion and wilfulness in it, and less reason; more dogmatism, and less charity. In the First Colloquy they put their main thesis as gently as they well could, and blended with their declamations on the law of retribution gracious and urgent invitations to repentance. Now, they state it well-nigh as harshly as they can; the urbane tones of invitation die from their lips, to give place to the shrill accents of invective and denunciation. Above all, they are dropping their disguise, always somewhat too thin. That irritating cloak—"the wicked man," in whom they wished Job to see himself as they saw him—grows more and more transparent as the Colloquy goes on, and fades into thin air at its close. We shall neither be vexed nor perplexed with it again. What they have still to allege against him they will say openly and to his face.

But this real, though dubious-looking, advance on the part of the Friends is as nothing compared with that of Job himself. In manner and in substance his speeches in this Colloquy indicate an immense and happy change. As the Friends grow more hot and wild and venomous, he takes a more reasonable and composed, a firmer and more hopeful, tone. He shakes off their sarcasms and insults more calmly and yet more swiftly than before. He no longer permits them to prescribe the line and direction of his thoughts, but compels them, even while he replies to them, to follow him. The more violently they assert the instant punishment of sin, the more clearly he sees that their assertion, so far from being verified, is contradicted, by the facts of human experience; the more assured he grows that, if the wicked sometimes suffer an adequate and immediate punishment, they often escape it. And on this fact—now that his eyes are opened to it by the

exaggerated and unqualified assertions of the Friends, and it is no longer dubious to him—he builds that hope, that conviction, of a strictly retributive life to come of which we have so magnificent an expression in his famous and memorable Inscription. The terms of that Inscription (Chapter xix. 23–27) are vague, as we have seen, and perhaps purposely vague. Job neither knows nor speculates on the date, the duration, or the mode of that life; and it is as unwise as it is unnecessary for us to read later and Christian meanings into his indefinite words. It is enough for him that Hades is no longer a land of gloom, black as the blackness of death, where there is no order, and the very light is darkness (Chapter x. 21, 22). He begins to see a true light in it, a divine order—a light of retribution, an order of righteousness. Before he was afflicted he may have conceived, and probably did conceive, of life in Hades, *i.e.*, of life after death, as a dim and cold reflection of life on earth, with shadowy joys and shadowy griefs; as a place of rest mainly, and quiescence, and repose (Chapter iii. 13–19). But now he believes that its life will be a real, full, retributive life, morally connected with, an evolution and development of, the present life; that the righteous will enjoy a full reward in it, be made glad according to the days in which they have been afflicted, and receive from God a divine compensation for all their wrongs, a final and complete vindication of their integrity.

How great and vital an advance this was, how it threw light both on the life that now is and on that which is to come, we can partly imagine for ourselves. And it grows clearer to us as we compare it with a similar advance, a similar discovery, among the Greeks, which took place at least a century after this Poem was written. The men of the Homeric times believed their dead, even those who had been most illustrious or most holy in life, to be mere εἰδωλα—mere images, phantoms, ghosts of their former selves, which had sunk into what Virgil calls “the dusky realms of the shades beneath the earth.” Their existence in Hades, the mere shadow-world in which they were but shadows, if it had a faint resemblance to their life on earth, had no logical or moral connection with it. The lines of human character and

destiny were not, so to speak, produced beyond the fatal chasm of the grave. Zeus, the god of the living, was not the god of the dead, and had no authority, no power over them; so that earthly piety brought no reward in the under-world, and impiety no necessary or special punishment. Hades had its own proper deities—stern, pitiless, implacable—themselves but little happier than the subjects of their rule, and utterly unlike the bright and joyous gods who ruled in heaven. But this primitive and purely negative conception could not long maintain itself. In the later legends of the inappeasable tortures of Tantalus and Sisyphus on the one hand, and of Minos, the impartial judge, on the other, the idea of moral retribution began to creep in and to connect this life with the next. But it was not until the great poets, such as Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and, above all, Pindar, and the great philosophers, above all, Plato, lit up the whole realm of Hades with the light of an eternal righteousness, of a just and impartial doom awaiting all the sons of men, that the thought of a future life really laid hold on the Greek mind and became a moral power, a power making for righteousness, among them.¹ And this, I apprehend, was the very light which had now dawned on the darkened mind of Job (*cf.* Chapter xvii. 13–16), making a new day in it. Not the defined Christian hope of immortality for the whole man, not an incredible or incomprehensible anticipation of the resurrection of the body; but a large, bright, though indefinite, assurance of an after-life morally connected with the present life, in which the justice often denied men here would run its full course and mount to its proper close: *this*, I take it, was the hope and conviction of Job, this the immense spoil which he now carries off from his conflict with death and despair.

¹ See Professor Fairbairn's Essay on the Belief in Immortality, Part iii. in "Studies in the Philosophy of Religion and History."

SECTION V
THE THIRD COLLOQUY.

CHAPTERS XXII.—XXVI.

THE argument we have so long pursued is now evidently drawing to a close. Within the limits as yet prescribed for it, it is, indeed, utterly exhausted. New premisses must be introduced into it, as they soon will be by Elihu, before any real conclusion can be reached. For the present all that deserves the name of argument is at an end, and this third Colloquy—which is virtually a duel between Eliphaz and Job—does but mark and record that significant fact. Bildad, as sententious as ever, has nothing but a trite generality to contribute (Chapter xxv.), which, as if conscious of its irrelevance, he tricks out in a vague magniloquence very unusual with him. “Bitter Zophar, with his blatant tongue,” is speechless with indignation or confusion.

The deep vexation of his inmost soul
Hath set a dumb arrest upon his tongue.

When Job pauses for him to speak, he has nothing to say. So long as Job simply questioned or denied any dogma of the accepted creed, Zophar could at least reaffirm it and denounce him for arraigning it. But now that Job has ceased to be negative, and become constructive, now that out of the very ruins created by despair he has built up the great hope of a retributive life beyond the grave, he has soared into a region into which, as authority had laid down no chart of it, Zophar is unable to follow him.

This, probably, is the reason why Zophar sits mute. Possibly, too, he feels that there is no need for him to speak, since Eliphaz has already said all that it was in his own heart to

say, and said it very much in his own manner. For, in this last Colloquy, we are saddened by an impressive illustration of the baneful effect of mere controversy even on a mind of the largest and most generous type. Eliphaz, the prophet, sinks wellnigh to the level of Zophar, the bigot. He does, indeed, make some brief show of argument (Chap. xxii. 2-4). He attempts to justify that inference of guilt from punishment, of sin from suffering, for which he had so long and earnestly contended,—arguing that, since God cannot be biassed by the considerations which disturb human judgments, his awards must be just, however unjust they may look. But he feels that he has not met the facts adverse to that inference which Job has adduced, and that he cannot meet them. And so, stung by the mortification of defeat, he breaks out into a string of definite charges against Job, accusing him of the most vulgar and brutal crimes (Chap. xxii. 5-11), for which he could allege no shadow of proof, and of which the well-known tenour of Job's life was a sufficient refutation. In short, he holds fast to his dogma that sin is the sole cause of suffering, and infers from Job's suffering what his sins *must have been* in order to vindicate it. He paints him as he ought to have been according to his dogma, not as he knew him to be in fact. For it is inconceivable that Job, living in the fierce light which beat upon the chieftain of a great clan, could have concealed from his neighbours the crimes of cruelty and violence with which Eliphaz charges him; and it is therefore impossible to believe that even Eliphaz himself did not know in his heart that these charges were untrue. No doubt he honestly believed that Job must have sinned, and sinned heinously, to provoke the calamities by which he was overwhelmed; but that he had "stripped the naked," and starved the famishing, and broken the arms of the orphan, in short, that he had been the tyrant instead of the friend of his clan, would have been as incredible to his accuser as it is to us, if he had not been blinded by the heat of controversy and the mortifications of public defeat.

But, let Eliphaz say what he will, Job is no longer to be moved either to his former indignation or to his former despair. The time is past in which he can be much disturbed

by anything that men can say against him. What he is in himself their thoughts of him cannot transpose.

Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell ;
Though all foul things should wear the brows of grace,
Yet grace must still look so.

And, however "foul" he may look to them, he is content so that God recognize his innocence. Now, moreover, that, instead of flinging out ambiguous hints and dubious reproaches, Eliphaz formulates distinct charges against him, he can afford to treat them with disdain. His inward feeling as he listens to these monstrous and incredible slanders is,—

I would I could
Quit *all* offences with as clear excuse
As well as I am doubtless I can purge
Myself of those which I am charged withal.

But he is not eager or anxious to purge himself of them. In the next section, "the Soliloquy," he does indirectly refute them, indeed, but for the present he disdains even to deny them. He calmly pursues his own course, and is no longer blown about by any wind the Friends can raise. Once more, and now more earnestly than ever, he longs to meet God face to face, for he is no longer afraid of God (Chap. xxiii. 6); nor does his assured conviction that God will vindicate him in the life to come at all abate his desire for an immediate vindication. "Job is no more pacified under present wrong by the vision of future rectification of it than Paul was satisfied under present sin by the vision of future redemption from it." Just as under the pressure of sin the Apostle cried out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" so, under the pressure of injustice, Job cried out, "O that I knew where I might find him! I would press up to his very seat" (Chap. xxiii. 3, 4). And though he cannot "find" God, he is sure that God has found him; that He will hereafter acquit him (Chap. xxiii. 7); and that, when God has fully assayed him, he shall come forth from the trial as gold from the fire (Chap. xxiii. 10).

What really occupies and dominates his thoughts throughout this Colloquy is not his personal fate, but "the common

problem—yours, mine, every one's." As in Chapter xxi. he had been startled by the fact that, under the rule of a righteous God, whole classes of lawless and godless men were suffered to spend their lives in ease and mirth to the very end, so now he is startled and perplexed by the facts that, under the same severe yet gracious rule, there are large classes of men who, for no sins of their own, are condemned to lives of the most sordid and unrelieved misery (Chap. xxiv. 1-12); and still other classes who addict themselves to vice and crime despite the detection and shame and ruin which dog their footsteps (Chap. xxiv. 13-24). That very problem, or, rather, that terrible series of problems, suggested to us by the existence of oppressed races and criminal classes, so seizes on the mind of Job, now that he too is miserable and oppressed, as to divert him from the sense of his own affliction. With the magnanimity we have seen to be habitual to him, he passes out beyond the limits of his personal interests and experiences into the wants, conditions, wrongs of the toiling and oppressed myriads, and by this philosophic breadth of contemplation abates and dulls the edge of his proper misery.

1. ELIPHAZ TO JOB.

CHAPTER XXII.

Even the prophetic spirit of Eliphaz was, as I have just said, so perverted by his dogmatic prepossessions, as not only to convince him that Job had fallen into some heinous sin, but also to prompt him to charge his friend with wanton and public crimes which it was impossible that he should have committed. And yet, when we come to look at his speech more closely, we find that the main lines of thought which he pursues in it are true and valuable in themselves, and become false only in the application he makes of them. In nothing, indeed, is the amazing power of the consummate artist to whom we owe this poem more apparent than in the fact that, even when he makes the speakers in his drama wholly wrong in intention and in the moral they point, he

nevertheless puts into their lips the purest truths couched in the most appropriate and beautiful forms. However false the conclusions at which they arrive, they reach them in the noblest way, so that we never altogether lose our respect for them. In the men depicted, if not created, by his genius, we find that very blending of truth with error, of moral goodness with moral weakness, which we see in the men whom God Himself has created and made. It is this which makes them so real to us, and which breathes into them the very breath of life.

In this Chapter, for example, in which Eliphaz falls so far below himself, he states very finely at least three great truths, although every one of them is stated in support of a false conclusion.

1. How true, for instance, and how finely put, is the thought of Verses 2-4,—that the judgments of God must be just because they are disinterested! The wisdom and piety of man are profitable to the man himself, not to God, just as his wickedness and folly are injurious not to God, but only to himself and his fellows. Why, then, since He receives no advantage from the righteousness of men, and takes no loss from their unrighteousness, should God judge men unfairly? There is no scope for selfish or personal motives such as might unconsciously bias even the most upright human judge if his private interests were touched,—now moving him to favour his own cause, and now, by the recoil of virtue, rendering him unjust to it. *That* surely is a noble and consolatory thought. And yet even this fine thought is instantly perverted to a sinister purpose. For Eliphaz proceeds to infer that, as God has no private ends to serve, as therefore all his punishments must be just, it follows that all punishment implies sin on the part of those who suffer it; that Job must have sinned heinously, or he would not have suffered so terribly: and that, as he was the opulent and powerful chief of a clan, his sins must have been those to which such a chieftain was most exposed—the sins of a grasping and merciless tyranny (Verses 5-11). Just as

Men judge by the complexion of the sky
The state and inclination of the day,

so Eliphaz infers the moral bent, the crimes of Job, from the opportunities and temptations of his rank and condition. And thus the truth with which he started is changed into a lie.

2. So, again, in Verses 12-20, how finely does he rebuke the practical atheism which, while it is not at the pains of denying the existence of God, shuts Him up in his own heaven—conceiving, or affecting to conceive, of Him as one of “the careless forces, sitting far withdrawn upon the heights of space,” taking no interest in the affairs of men, and exerting no influence upon them! Atheists of this stamp, such loungers along that “ancient way trodden by men of sin,” are only to be arrested, says Eliphaz, by earthquake and tempest; they cannot see the light until it becomes lightning. They are like that foolish generation which ate and drank, married and was given in marriage, “until the flood came and swept them all away.” It is a solemn thought, an impressive warning; his statement of it is finely conceived, and glows with a generous indignation. But when he proceeds to represent Job, whose whole soul is saturated and suffused with the consciousness of a living and present God, as one of these indolent and insolent atheists, he is once more guilty of a gross and hardy perversion of the truth.

3. It is curious and significant that, while in the Second Colloquy Eliphaz had uttered no invitation to repentance, no word of promise and hope, he closes *this* harangue, otherwise so hard and cruel, with an urgent entreaty that Job would “return to the Almighty,” and is profuse in promises of good. If Job will but put away iniquity and take his law from God’s mouth, all will yet be well with him; he shall find a new and brighter light gleaming on his path, and have

all the ruins of distressful times
Repair’d with double riches of content.

It is curious that *these* should be the last words we hear from the lips of Eliphaz; for, as we have seen, the Poet has throughout portrayed him as one of the prophetic order of men, and here he is unconsciously predicting the final issue of this great drama. For, in the end, Job did return and

humble himself under the hand of the Almighty; he did receive at the hands of the Lord "twice as much as he had before." And this reversion to a kindlier and more gracious mood on the part of Eliphaz (comp. Chapter xxii. 21-30 with Chapter v. 17-27) may, I hope, be taken as a sign that, though in the heat of controversy he had brought the most terrible charges against Job, yet in his heart he did not himself believe them to be true, or would at least be very gladly convinced that they were not true. But, in any case, in his concluding invitation to contrition and amendment, and his picture of the happy consequences of repentance, he puts a momentous truth very happily. His last words are really very finely said. The one thing that renders them utterly untrue, and which must have wholly spoiled and vitiated them to the ear of Job, is the unfounded assumption on which they proceed. To *him* they are a mere insult, since they assume that he is guilty of sins the most open, palpable, and shameful. And so, once more, the truth—even truth in its most gracious and winning aspects—is turned into a lie.

In fine, we could hardly have more impressive illustrations than we may find in this Chapter of the fact that dogmas, however true in themselves, lose all their power for good unless they are informed and illumined by "charity."

CHAPTER XXII.

1. *Then answered Eliphaz the Temanite and said :*
2. *Can a man profit God ?*
 Surely even a wise man can but profit himself !
3. *If thou art righteous, is that any gain to the Almighty,*
 Or is it any advantage to Him that thou makest thy ways perfect ?
4. *Will He plead with thee out of reverence for thee ?*
 Will He go with thee into judgment ?
5. *Is not thy wickedness great,*
 And are not thine iniquities without end ?
6. *For thou hast bound thy brother by a pledge without cause,*
 And stripped the naked of their raiment ;
7. *Not a drink of water hast thou given to the faint,*
 And from the famishing thou hast withholden bread :
8. *And the strong of arm—the land was his !*
 And the lofty of brow—he was its inhabitant !

9. *Thou didst send widows away empty,
And let the arms of the orphan be broken :*
10. *Therefore are snares around thee,
And on a sudden fear confoundeth thee,*
11. *And a darkness, so that thou canst not see,
Or a flood of waters, covereth thee.*
12. *Is not God in the heights of heaven ?
Behold, then, the topmost stars, how high they be !*
13. *Yet thou sayest, " How doth God know ?
Can He judge through the darkness ?*
14. *Clouds veil Him, so that He cannot see,
And He walketh [only] in the vault of heaven !"*
15. *Wilt thou keep that ancient way
Trodden by men of sin*
16. *Who were cut off before their time,
Whose firm foundation became a flowing stream,*
17. *Who said unto God, " Depart from us,"
And, " What can the Almighty do for us !"*
18. *Though He had filled their houses with good things ?
Far from me be the counsel of the wicked.*
19. *The righteous shall see it and rejoice,
And the innocent shall laugh them to scorn,*
20. *And say, " Are not our adversaries destroyed ?
Hath not a fire devoured their substance ?"*
21. *Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace ;
Thereby shall good come to thee :*
22. *Take, I pray thee, a law from his mouth,
And lay up his words in thine heart.*
23. *If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up,
If thou put iniquity far from thy tent.*
24. *Yea, scatter thy gold upon the ground
And Ophir among the stones of the torrent,*
25. *And the Almighty shall be thy gold,
And as silver purchased with toil :*
26. *Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Almighty,
And shalt lift up thy face unto God ;*
27. *Thou shalt pray to Him, and He will hear thee,
And thou shalt pay thy vows ;*
28. *Thou shalt frame a purpose, and it shall be established for thee,
And light shall gleam on thy paths :*
29. *Thou shalt say to them that are cast down, " Arise !
For He will succour the meek ;"*

30. *Even him that is not guiltless shalt thou deliver,
And he shall be saved by the pureness of thy hands.*

The Chapter divides itself into three sections. (1) In Verses 2-11 Eliphaz describes the sins of which Job must have been guilty in order to provoke the calamities which had fallen upon him; (2) in Verses 12-20 he traces these sins of inhumanity to Job's impiety, his false and profane conception of the Almighty Ruler of the universe; and (3) in Verses 21-30 he entreats him to repent of those sins by rising to a true conception of God, and by returning to a true relation to Him. Throughout he makes no attempt to deny the facts which Job had adduced in the last Colloquy, although, if those facts were true, they utterly shattered the hypothesis maintained by the Friends, or to refute the inference which Job had drawn from them. Nor does he once so much as glance at that great hope of a future life, in which the inequalities of this life should be rectified, which had dawned on the mind of Job. He is content to repeat what he had said before, what his friends had echoed with wearisome iteration, as though no new facts had been adduced which their old formula could not be stretched to cover.

He opens the first section with an argument of some philosophic reach, attempting to shew by rigid logical proof what sins Job *must* have committed, and why he is sure that Job has committed them (*Verses 2-4*). His argument, briefly put, is this. No gain accrues to God from the piety of men, no loss from their impiety. Because He has nothing to fear and nothing to hope for at their hands, his decisions must be unaffected by personal considerations; they must be strictly level and square with the facts; and, his decisions being just, He is by no means likely to be moved by the foolish outcries with which men may greet them. When He punishes men, it must be simply because their sins call for punishment. As He has punished Job, it must be for his sins that He has punished him. And as Job has again and again demanded that his sins should be openly alleged against him, Eliphaz will meet that demand.

He proceeds to meet it in *Verses 5-11*. It was easy enough to meet it. Nothing but delicacy, nothing but friendly con-

sideration, had kept him silent so long, or induced him to veil in ambiguous innuendoes the crimes with which Job had stained the purity of his soul. For, of course, his sins were those of his time and class. Every Oriental "lord" was apt to play the tyrant. Irresponsible power rendered them inhumane. This was "the great wickedness" of Job. He had been heartless to the poor and needy, inhospitable to the stranger. "The man of the arm," *i.e.* of the strong arm, the man of power—in other words, he himself—to him the whole land belonged of right; and the man with the lofty brow, the proud look—again, he himself—was alone entitled to dwell in it. All others held their possessions in it by his favour, and might be stripped of them at his caprice. He had not scrupled to strip them. Widows and orphans, of all mortals the least protected in the Orient, that they might not perish of want, had besought succour or grace of him; and he, who had first violently despoiled them of their inheritance, drove them with violence from his seat, the widow with empty hands, the orphan with broken arms.

"Supposed sincere and holy in his thoughts," wearing a mask of piety, these were the crimes of which he had been guilty in secret. And it is for these crimes, and for such crimes as these, that his way now stands thick with snares (*comp.* Chap. xviii. 8–10), that detection and destruction hem him in on every side, leaving no loophole of escape. His approaching ruin made itself felt even before it came upon him. He was shaken by sudden tremours and forebodings, all warning him that his end was at hand. It was not God, as he had complained (Chap. xix. 6, 8), who had "flung his net" about him and "set darkness in his paths:" the net was woven by his own fingers, the darkness was but the shadow cast by his own guilt.

Verse 11 is difficult only because there is so much in it. Job did not see the true cause of his sufferings, and therefore could not recognize their justice. And so Eliphaz points out to him that the darkness of which he complained, and the flood of misery in which he is being swept away, are but the natural and deserved punishment of his transgressions. But, besides this, there is in these words an allusion to the Deluge.

Indirectly, and by an allusion expanded in Verses 15-18, Eliphaz compares Job to that evil generation which, by crimes like his, had provoked the just resentment of Heaven, and perished miserably in the Flood. Let Job beware, lest he too should be drowned in the depths of his own transgressions. Weighed down by iniquities so many and so heinous, how can he hope to escape?

With what wing shall his affections fly
Toward fronting peril and opposed decay?

Eliphaz, leading Job toward the brink from which he may see his non-existing sins, cuts but a sorry figure for so great a man, and would be a strange picture of the blind man leading the man with eyes, if there were not so many modern repetitions of it.

In the second section (Verses 12-20) he traces the inhumanity and tyranny of Job to his impiety, to his false conception of God and of God's relation to man. Because Job has denied retribution to be the only law of the Divine Providence, Eliphaz assumes him to deny that Providence altogether. According to him, Job conceives of God as strolling along the vault of heaven, careless of mankind and "their ancient tale of wrong," not descending to earth in order to administer justice, nor leaving the easy Paradise which He has planted for Himself; too far off to see, too self-absorbed to care for, the wrongs and miseries of men (*Verses 12-14*). In the previous Colloquy (Chap. xxi. 7-16) Job had, indeed, expressed his astonishment that many of the wicked wax old and become mighty, wearing away their days in mirth and affluence, smitten by no judgment, although they say unto God, "Depart from us!" and, "What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him?" But he had also expressly affirmed that their prosperity did not spring from their own hand, and had disavowed all part and lot with them, in the formula of deprecation and abhorrence: "Far from me be the counsel of the wicked!" And now, with the artifice and insincerity of a mere controversialist bent on victory, Eliphaz puts into the mouth of Job himself the very words which Job had put into the mouth of the wicked, and even renounces all part in

his detestable sentiments in the very formula in which he had himself renounced all participation in them! "Wilt thou," he demands, with an explicit reference to the generation swept away by the Deluge (*Verses 15, 16*), "keep that ancient path, trodden by men of sin, who were cut off before their time, whose firm foundation became a flowing stream?" Wilt thou say to God, and of God, what they said? And he instantly and evidently assumes that Job *will*, that he has fallen into their base Epicurean conception of the Almighty. For he not only hastily deprecates that conception for himself; he also proceeds, in *Verses 19, 20*, to shew how the truly righteous regard the rise and fall of the wicked; how *they* look cheerfully on the phenomena which fill Job with sadness and with sad and obstinate questionings, sure that the higher the wicked rise the lower they will fall; and how they, the truly pious, will mock at them when they topple over to destruction, and will exult in their fall. As one listens to him, indeed, one is tempted to exclaim, "Far from us be the counsel of the *righteous*!"

In the third section (*Verses 21–30*) Eliphaz exhorts Job to return to right thoughts of Jehovah, to enter into the right relation to Him, urging especially upon him how much, in many ways, he will gain thereby. It is a strange mixture of earthly and heavenly good that he offers him. But the fact that Eliphaz dwells mainly on the delights of communion with God and on the power to succour the downcast and to intercede for the guilty—dwelling most on these spiritual advantages because he thinks them most likely to allure and persuade Job—shews, I think, that he had formed a much truer and higher conception of the man than he has allowed to appear.

He urges Job to "make friends" with God, to take the law of his life from God's mouth, that so good may come to him, and peace,—meaning by "good," not goodness, but good fortune, and by "peace," rest from the obstinate questionings and restless doubts with which he was wearying himself in vain (*Verses 21 and 22*). If he return to the Almighty—from whom, however, he has never wandered—he shall be "built up," another synonym for good fortune, for outward

prosperity (*Verse 23*). But, in order that he may return, he must put away "iniquity"—*i.e.*, the secret spoils, the iniquitous gains, the treasures acquired by violence and extortion—which he has hidden in his tent (comp. Chap. xi. 14). Nay, more, he must renounce the treasures in which hitherto he has put his trust, even though he have acquired them honestly, flinging his gold upon the ground and among the stones of the torrent; for, in *Verse 24*, "Ophir" is but a synonym for gold.¹ If he will put from him the fine gold in which he has trusted and delighted, then the Almighty will Himself become his treasure and his delight (*Verse 25*). He whose face, like that of Cain, is now cast down with a burdening sense of guilt, will lift up his head with fearless joy (*Verse 26*). When he prays, instead of, as now, remaining deaf and mute, God will answer him. He will "pay his vows," because the favour or deliverance he asks will be vouchsafed him, so that his vow will always fall due (*Verse 27*). Success will wait on his schemes and enterprises; light will shine on all his ways, so that he will neither stumble nor miss his aim (*Verse 28*). And, best of all for a man of his generous and compassionate temper, his words will shed new strength into fainting hearts; power will be given him to succour the weak and distressed; and, he himself being righteous, his supplications will become so effectual, that they will avail even for the unrighteous (*Verses 29, 30*). His prayer shall be that

Which pierces so, that it assaults
Mercy itself, and frees *all* faults.

This glowing description of the peace, the happiness, and the power to serve, which result from friendship with God, is not unworthy to be the last utterance of Eliphaz, if only we drop out of it the sinister lines in which he depicts Job as needing to put away his iniquity and to return to the Almighty. It is characteristic of the man. For, as I have said, in these closing words the prophetic Eliphaz foreshadows

¹ Just as the fabric woven from the filaments of the nettle is called "muslin," from Mossul, and cloth with figures in it, "damask," from Damascus, so gold is named from Ophir, on the north coast of the Runn and east of the mouth of the Indus, the place where it was then most copiously produced.—*Delitzsch*.

the true and final close of this great drama. And it is really very remarkable, and must, I think, be taken as a stroke of unstudied and unconscious art, that in the very last Verse put into his mouth, the Poet makes him utter a prediction which was afterwards most happily fulfilled in his own experience and in that of the Friends for whom he speaks. As he finally retires from an argument too high for him, he tells Job that his prayers will avail, and the pureness of his hands, even for "him that is not guiltless." And in the last Chapter of the Poem we read that the anger of the Lord was kindled against Eliphaz and against his two friends, and that He sent them to Job, that he might intercede for them; "*for,*" said Jehovah, "*him will I surely accept, and not deal out to you according to your impiety.*" The prophecy of Eliphaz was thus literally fulfilled; the fervent effectual prayer of Job *did* avail to deliver even those who were not guiltless.

And so, with a prediction on his lips, afterwards fulfilled with so strange and so just an irony, Eliphaz goes on his way, and we hear him no more.

2. JOB TO ELIPHAZ.

CHAPTERS XXIII. AND XXIV.

A man who has eschewed evil and followed after that which is good, till God Himself has pronounced him upright and perfect, might, one should think, be so happy as "to avoid the carping censures of the world," or at least of his friends, even though both his friends and the world were ignorant of the Divine verdict upon him; nay, even though they themselves knew but little of his past history. For virtue and piety leave a visible stamp and impress on the very nature of the man who has long served them.

There is a kind of character in his life
That to the observer doth his history
Fully unfold,

quite fully enough, at all events, to save us from mistaking

him for an open and notorious sinner. But let a man be never so pure, never so eminent,

No might nor greatness in mortality
Can censure 'scape : back-wounding calumny
The whitest virtue strikes.

Though there be no evil in him, there may be much in the eyes that regard him; and the evil eye distorts what it looks upon and tinges it with its own hues. Job's virtue was of the whitest. There was in him "a kind of character" which renders the censure of his friends incredible even to us who see him but afar off. And yet, as we have heard, Eliphaz does not scruple to "accuse him home and home" with the most flagrant crimes, crimes wholly inconsistent with his character, however consistent with his position.

Job takes these charges very quietly, in part because he knows his entire innocence of them, and finds open accusation a relief after so many veiled insinuations and "ambiguous givings out;" and in part because he is preoccupied with larger questions, and questions more open to debate than that of his own innocence or guilt. He can leave his character to speak for itself. "His integrity stands without blemish," let Eliphaz say what he will. And he is so absorbed in the endeavour to find God, who knows his innocence, and who seems to evade him lest He should have to attest it (Chap. xxiii.), that he can pay but little heed to what men may say against him. Nor is it only the mystery of his own fate which absorbs him. His own misery has opened his eyes to the misery of his fellows (Chap. xxiv.); the mystery of his own doom runs up into a still profounder mystery. The thought which engages and appals him is not simply that God has bruised *his* heart (Chap. xxiii. 16), but that the souls of myriads mourn under the oppressions of a constant misery, and yet God heedeth not the wrong (Chap. xxiv. 12); while myriads more rebel against the light, and yet God giveth them security (Chap. xxiv. 13, 23). It is not merely the misery he suffers, and that men suffer, however, which perplexes and distresses him. *That* is a darkness which might be borne if only he could see any good end to be answered by it. What most of all tries and saddens him is that he

cannot see God through this darkness, cannot see what good end, or that any good end, is to be subserved by the wrongs and calamities men have to endure. It was on this great problem that he was engaged before Eliphaz had spoken; and he now continues to labour and agonize over it almost as though the process of his thoughts had not been disturbed.

CHAPTERS XXIII. AND XXIV.

CHAPTER XXIII.—1. *Then answered Job and said :*

2. *Still is my complaint bitter,
And my stroke heavier than my groaning.*
3. *O that I knew where I might find Him !
I would press even to his seat ;*
4. *I would set out my cause before Him,
And fill my mouth with pleas ;*
5. *I should know the words with which He would answer me,
And understand what He would say to me :*
6. *Would He contend against me in the greatness of his strength ?
Nay, He would make concession unto me :*
7. *There might the upright reason with Him,
And once for all I should be acquitted by my Judge.*
8. *Behold, I go towards the East, but He is not there,
And Westward, but I cannot perceive Him ;*
9. *Toward the North, where He is working, but I cannot see Him,
Where He veileth Himself in the South, but I cannot find Him !*
10. *But He knoweth the way I take ;
When He hath assayed me, I shall come forth as gold ;*
11. *My foot hath held to his tracks,
His way have I kept, nor turned aside,*
12. *Neither have I gone back from the behest of his lips ;
I have preferred the words of his mouth to my own resolves.*
13. *Sole is He, and who can turn Him back ?
And what his heart willeth that will He do ;*
14. *That which is decreed for me will He perform :
And many such things are ordained by Him.*
15. *Therefore am I troubled at his Presence ;
When I consider, I am afraid of Him ;*
16. *For it is God who hath bruised my heart,
And it is the Almighty who hath filled me with confusion :*
17. *For I should not be dumb because of darkness,
Because thick darkness enshroudeth me.*

CHAPTER XXIV.—1. *Why are not times reserved by the Almighty,
And why do not they who know Him see his days?*

2. *Some remove landmarks;*

They steal flocks and pasture them:

3. *They drive away the ass of the fatherless,
And take the widow's ox in pledge:*

4. *They push the needy from the path,
The poor of the land are made to slink out of sight.*

5. *Behold, like wild asses in the wilderness,
They go forth to their labour,
Rising early in quest of food:*

The desert must yield them bread for their children!

6. *They reap fodder for him in the field,
And glean the vineyards of the wicked;*

7. *Naked they pass the night, unclad,
And with no shelter from the cold;*

8. *They are drenched by the mountain-storm,
And for lack of shelter they cling to the rock.*

9. *Some pluck the orphan from the breast,
And exact a pledge beyond his means from the poor;*

10. *Naked, they slink away without clothes;
Hungry, they must bear the sheaves:*

11. *They press out oil within the walls,
They tread the winevats—and thirst:*

12. *Vassals groan in the city,
And the soul of the wounded mourns:
Yet God heedeth not the wrong!*

13. *These are of those who rebel against the light,
Who will know nothing of its ways,
And who abide not in its paths:—*

14. *The murderer, who riseth before the dawn;
He slayeth the poor and needy,
And at night he playeth the thief:—*

15. *The eye of the adulterer also watcheth for the evening gloom,
Saying, "No eye will recognize me!"
And he muffleth up his face:*

16. *They dig through houses in the dark;
By day they seal themselves up,
They know not the light,*

17. *For to them the dawn is as darkness,
But the night hath no terrors for them;*

18. *They pass swiftly as on the surface of the waters,
Their heritage is cursed in the land;*

- They turn no more by the way of the vineyards.*
 19. *As drought and heat consume snow-waters,*
 So Hades them that sin ;
 20. *The womb forgetteth them,*
 The worms batten on them ;
 They shall be remembered no more,
 And iniquity shall be broken like a tree.
 21. *They devour the barren who bear not,*
 And do no good turn by the widow ;
 22. *They drag off the mighty by their power :*
 They rise up again even when they have despaired of life.
 23. *God hath given them security, and they lean on it,*
 And his eyes are on their way ;
 24. *They are exalted a while ; then, they are not, but are brought low ;*
 They are gathered like other men,
 And are cut off like the topmost ears of corn.
 25. *But, if it be not so, who will prove it,*
 Or make my words of no worth ?

Chapter xxiii.—It is very strange that the Friends of Job, who have so long “gone about to apply a moral medicine to a mortifying mischief,” should have forgotten that

The miserable have no other medicine,
 But only hope,

and should even have tried to snatch away from him the one hope by which he was sustained. This hope in the righteousness of God, and in an approaching manifestation of that righteousness, here finds fit and noble expression. The Chapter, so far from breathing, as some affirm, “a bitter and maddened spirit,” is inspired by a sublime and inalienable confidence in the equity of the Supreme Judge. Job distrusts neither Him nor himself. God is just ; Job is upright : but how is the upright man to reach the seat of that Divine Judge who is present with him, and yet absent ; absolutely present, but not visibly present ; felt, yet not discerned ? *This* is the question which now agitates the mind of Job, and not any distrust of God’s equity, or any fear of his own acquittal, nor any “stubborn opposite intent.”

Whether *Verse 2* is an ejaculation of distress, the sigh of a perplexed and burdened spirit, or whether it is an exclama-

tion thrown out at Eliphaz, the only reply which as yet Job deigns to make to *him*, it is hard to say. In the one case we must read it as meaning, "Ah, how bitter is my complaint! but how much more bitter the pain that wrings it from me!" In the other, we must read it as meaning, "You still think my complaint bitter and rebellious, that there is a mutiny in my mind against God. But is not his hand heavy upon me, far heavier than my groaning?"

But if there be a passing allusion to Eliphaz in this Verse, Job at once passes from all thought of the Friends, and of the charges—gross, open, palpable—which they have alleged against him. For, in *Verse 3*, he commences a pathetic lament over the absence of his Judge, who yet is somehow present with him, which extends to the close of *Verse 9*; and this is a sorrow which it had not entered the heart of his Friends to conceive. More than once (Chap. ix. 34, xiii. 21) Job had expressed the natural fear that, even were he admitted to plead his cause before God, the splendours of the Divine Majesty would strike him dumb. But he has now risen to higher, and therefore truer, thoughts of Him. Could he but find Him, he would not stand afar off; he would press straight on to his royal seat. In the light of that gracious Presence his cause would take order and proportion in his thoughts, and, instead of being struck mute, his mouth would be filled with pleas. The words of his Judge would not perplex him as his acts had done; he would understand what He would say to him. Instead of confronting and confounding him with the brightness of his glory, the Almighty would veil his splendours; He would both listen and speak with a grace that would put him at his ease, and decide the cause with an equity which would acquit him of every charge. His only complaint is that he cannot discover his august Adversary, who is yet his truest Friend, that his Judge eludes his search.

Besides this invincible confidence in the justice of God, two points in these Verses are worthy of special remark. One is that, in the face of all the charges and innuendoes of the Friends, Job is as sure of his own integrity as he is of the Divine justice. The consciousness that his cause is good comes out in the pervading tone of the passage; and receives

direct expression—if not in the final clause of *Verse 6*, which some render, “Nay, *even He will not impute aught against me*,” at least—in the triumphant ring of *Verse 7*.

There might the upright reason with Him,
And once for all I should be acquitted by my Judge.

It does not follow, however, either that Job was, or that he thought himself, wholly free from sin. Never, indeed, was any man so perfect,

but some defect in him
Did quarrel with the noblest grace he owed,
And put it to the foil.

And noble as the man was, noble almost beyond parallel, even we can see that he had the defect of his quality. A righteous man, he was too apt to regard his righteousness as his own, to ignore God's part in it. But all he means to affirm, here and throughout the Poem, is that, if he had sinned, he had confessed and atoned for his sin; that, though it had pleased God to give him “a heart as full of sorrows as the sea of sands,” these sorrows were not the result and punishment of his sins, and did not therefore imply and prove his guilt. This is the ground on which he takes his stand, and from which he refuses to be dislodged by any pressure of argument or any biting wind of calumny.

The other point to be remarked in *Verses 2-9* is that Job's conviction of God's presence becomes the more absolute as he looks for Him in vain. He turns east and west, north and south, *i.e.* toward all quarters of the heavens, making passionate inquisition and search for God. And though he can nowhere discern Him, he is sure that God is everywhere present—“*working*” in the north, “*veiling Himself*” in the south (*Verse 9*), although neither in south nor north can he descry Him. The point is worth noting, if only because it illustrates that double consciousness of God experienced by every spiritual mind. How often are *we* conscious of a God present, but not visible; present, but not accessible; at work everywhere around us, yet veiling Himself from us, so that we cannot, or fancy that we do not, come into any vital

contact, any sustaining fellowship, with Him! Stunned by some sudden stroke of sorrow or loss, or overwhelmed with contrition for a wasted life, how many a man gropes after God if haply he may find Him, although He is not far from any one of us! To all in that unhappy, and yet most happy case—for those who really seek God *will* find Him—Job's example is of priceless value. Let them but hold fast their conviction that God "besets them behind and before," and has "laid his hand upon them," let them but still seek after Him, and for them, as for Job, the veil will drop at last, and they will see Him as He is.

It will be their wisdom, too, as it was Job's, to be sure that, though they cannot find God, God has found them. He expresses this conviction in Verses 10–13. God, the very God whom he cannot see, knows the way he takes—knows, therefore, his innocence of all that is alleged against him, his uniform and anxious obedience to the Divine law, his instant and constant preference of the Divine will to his own; and hence Job is sure that, when he has been fully assayed or tried, he shall come forth as gold.

These Verses are very graphic and suggestive. "The way that I take" of *Verse* 10 is, in the Original, "*the way that is with me*," and means, "the way in which I habitually walk."¹ And this way, as we learn from *Verse* 11, is God's way—"His way have I kept." For the Poet conceives of the inward law, the law of the inward man, as a path in which God goes before us as a guide. And the first line of the Verse, "My foot hath held to his tracks," not only implies that God goes before us in the way of righteousness, that so long as we keep that way we may perceive the imprint of his feet and place our feet in the steps which He has left; it also affirms that, so far from having "kept that ancient way trodden by men of sin," in which Eliphaz had charged him with walking (Chap. xxii. 15), and putting God out of his thoughts, he has habitually trodden in the path of righteousness, never planting an onward foot until he could see the print of God's feet before him. In the final clause of *Verse* 12, the verb rendered "esteemed" in our Authorized Version, and here "preferred,"

¹ Ewald translates, *den mir gewohnten Weg*.

is, literally, "*I have laid up*" as a priceless and incomparable treasure; while the word rendered "resolves" is "*law*:" so that what Job really asserts is that, as compared with "his own law," his own natural will and determination, the words of God's mouth were to him a treasure, not only of superior, but of inestimable, worth. In short, he *has* "taken a law" from the mouth of the Almighty; he *has* "laid up his words in his heart"—acting on the counsel of Eliphaz (Chap. xxii. 22) even before it was given. But most remarkable of all is the conviction expressed in *Verse 10*, "*When he hath assayed me, I shall come forth as gold*;" and that, not simply because it is so fine an utterance of Job's assured trust both in his own integrity and in the Divine recognition of that integrity, but mainly because it is the first hint we have of any suspicion on his part that suffering, instead of being the punishment of sin, may be a discipline of righteousness. The hint is afterward worked out at length by Elihu. But here already Job seems to reach a glimpse of it for himself. The thought only passes through his mind; had it staid with him, it would have been an inexpressible comfort and support: but still the thought does pass through his mind that men are tried like gold, in order to purge away their dross, in order that their true value may be certified and revealed. A greater than Job has taught us that even the branch which does bring forth fruit is pruned and cleansed, "that it may bring forth more fruit."¹ And one of our own poets, the greatest and wisest, has cast the lesson in another picturesque form:—

Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,
Not light them for themselves; for if our virtues
Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
As if we had them not.

And just as torches must be often struck and shaken if they are to give their best light, so the men who are as "lights in the world" are often exposed to shocks of change and blows of circumstance in order that they may shine before men with a purer lustre. Suffering at once tries, enhances, and manifests their virtues; and so they are often permitted to suffer that

¹ John xv. 2.

their virtues may "go forth of them." Job's virtues would have been unknown to us but for his sufferings; it is to these he owes it that "the wide world is not ignorant of his worth."

But this gleam of light appears but for a moment; it is instantly devoured by his traditional conception of the purpose and function of suffering; and as he still thinks that suffering ought to be reserved for the guilty, Job returns to his unsolved problem, and is once more sorrowfully perplexed by the apparent inequalities of the Divine Providence.

The opening phrase of *Verse 13* is so curt and compressed, that it is almost impossible to determine its exact shade of meaning. Literally rendered, the Hebrew runs, *He is in one*, or, *He remains in one*; and the underlying affirmation of this abrupt phrase may be either that God is unchangeable, or that He is unique. I have rendered it in the latter sense, "*Sole is He*," i.e. unique, one by Himself, unparalleled, unapproachable; understanding Job to assert the unity of God and his sole and absolute authority. But the other rendering, which understands him to assert that the Divine Judge, who so studiously evades him, remains in one mind and cannot be turned from his purpose to treat Job as a criminal, has as many great names in its favour, and as fully accords with the general sense of the passage. For, in *Verses 13, 14*, Job is evidently brooding over the thought that God is not to be turned from his purpose, whatever it may be; and though he has just professed that he prefers God's will to his own, he has not fully learned that what God wills must be best. It is not the goodness of God's will which now occupies his mind, but the sovereignty and unchangeableness of that will. And hence, in the latter clause of *Verse 14*, he anticipates that, as it evidently has been God's will that he should suffer, he may still have to suffer, still have to endure many similar calamities at his hands. Therefore (*Verse 15*) he is troubled at God's presence—at the *presence*, mark, of the very God whose *absence* he had just deplored (*Verses 8, 9*), and fears Him of whom he but now said (*Verses 3-7*) that, could he but see and plead with Him, he should not be afraid.

The seeming paradox is explained in *Verses 16, 17*, especially the latter; from which we learn that it is not the mere

darkness of his calamity, that it is not the mere mystery of his suffering, which so intolerably wounds and amazes him, but the apparent hostility of God. Pain, penury, the scorn and contempt of men, the unfriendliness of friends—all these may be borne: it is not these which break his spirit. What really unmans and breaks him down is not this outer darkness, but the inner darkness which it breeds, the eclipse of faith, the dejection of a love unrequited and disdained, a confidence which wins no response, the hideous confusion of thought bred by the conviction that the God who is present to bruise his heart is not present to listen to his appeals, to explain and indicate the course He takes with him. It is *this* which cuts Job to the quick; for the spirit of a man may sustain him under any outward stroke: but a broken spirit who can bear?

It is this also which gives force to the demand with which the next chapter opens.

Chapter xxiv. Verse 1.—If the present God cannot become the manifest God, if He who smites men will not appear to heal at every moment when the wounded heart cries out for Him, why at least does He not go on circuit, why not have set times when all who take Him for their King may come and plead their cause before Him? Let the Friends say what they will, and they have been very emphatic on the promptitude and certainty of the Divine judgments, God does *not* appoint, or does not keep, these days. And hence the unjust and rapacious perpetually escape the retributions they have provoked.

Then follows a graphic description of the crimes of which men dressed in a little brief authority are guilty, and of the terrible sufferings which they inflict on large and various classes of their fellows. Some are so openly and glaringly unjust that they do not scruple to remove their neighbours' landmarks—a very common crime in the East, where hedges are unknown and walls are scarce—and even to drive off and openly pasture among their own flocks the sheep found in the fields they have invaded. Adding wrong to wrong, iniquity to iniquity, they seize on pretence of debt "*the ass*" of the orphan, the only one he possesses, and the

yoke-ox of the widow, again the only one, leaving them utterly destitute. They push the poor, and even those whom they have made poor, "from the path," from their accustomed way and course of life, so that they are compelled "to wander hither and thither, without home and without right," to slink out of view, to fall into the miserable and abject conditions of the aboriginal inhabitants of the land (*Verses 2-4*).

In *Verses 5-11* we get a pathetic glimpse of the condition to which these aborigines, expelled by their more civilized invaders from their dwellings and fields, have sunk in the long course of years, and to which the poor and needy of the superior tribes are now being reduced by the exactions of their strong and unjust lords. Of this aboriginal and troglodyte race we have a still fuller description in Chapter xxx., and may defer till we reach that Chapter any detailed examination of their wretched estate. For the present we need only note that, like the wild asses, they wander through the barren steppe, or desert, demanding food of it, searching for its scanty and innutritious roots and herbs—these being the only bread they can get for themselves and their children. Their conquerors and oppressors may hire them to cut fodder for their cattle, but they dare not suffer them to reap the corn, lest they should eat of it. They may engage them to glean the straggling grapes which ripen late, but they dare not let them gather the best grapes or labour in the vats, lest they should drink of the wine. Homeless and naked, they are drenched by the mountain storms, and, for lack of shelter, are compelled to huddle under the rocks, pressing close to them and clinging to them with their hands (*Verses 5-8*).

It is to this abject and miserable condition, or to a condition closely corresponding to it, that the petty tyrants of the clan are fast bringing the poor and needy of their own race. If these as yet are not driven to the wild, vagrant, and gipsy life of the aborigines who haunt the neighbouring rocks and caves, they are at least reduced to a form of serfage, or slavery, which is but a step above it. Reduced to utter penury by usury and oppression, stripped of their very clothing, they carry in the sheaves for which they hunger in vain, and tread out the wine with which they must not

slake their thirst, and express the oil with which they dare not anoint themselves (*Verses 9–11*).

In the city their state is no happier than in the fields without, among the barns and vats and presses. For here they are but vassals who groan under manifold oppressions. They must fight and take wounds, and expose themselves to the loss of all things, in quarrels not their own; for as the old sad Russian proverb has it, "When wolves fight, sheep lose their wool." Destitute of all else, their very lives do not belong to them, but must be risked, or flung away, at the bidding of their lords (*Verse 12*).

And, all the while, God looks down on town and field unmoved! So far from calling men to account, so far from smiting the wicked and saving the oppressed, He pays no heed even to these crying and intolerable wrongs!

Nor are these merciless and exacting tyrants the only "rebels against the light." In *Verses 13–17* Job opens a new count of his indictment, and enumerates three other kinds of men who will not abide in its ways,—the murderer, the adulterer, and the thief. The villain of *Verse 14* is the base petty murderer who, rising before dawn, lies in ambush where he may spring out upon the peasant going, through the darkness, to his work, defenceless and alone, and who is content with a few paltry coins or trinkets as the wages of his guilt—the coward who is parcel brigand, parcel thief. As he selects the dark hour before dawn, so the adulterer of *Verse 15* waits for the sudden gloom of evening, when, to escape detection, he muffles himself in the loose robe of a woman—as those who seek such nocturnal adventures still do in the Syrian towns—that, unhindered and unsuspected, he may enter the harem of his neighbour. The thief of *Verse 16* furnishes himself, not with crowbar and chisel, but—houses in the East being for the most part built of soft unbaked bricks or of clay—with a spade, that he may "dig" his way through the walls. Hence the Greek name for a burglar is *τοιχώρυχος*, "one who digs through a wall."

One feature is common (*Verse 17*) to all these hardy yet most miserable offenders. They hate the light. They "seal," or shut themselves up from it. *Light* is terrible to them, lest

it should disclose their guilt, and not, as to most men, darkness. To them the dawn is as darkness; the night has no terrors for them, for they are familiar with it. The thought is repeated so often in this brief description (Verses 13-17), and so much stress is laid upon it, that, obviously, the Poet wishes to impress upon us the fact that "they love darkness rather than light, *because their deeds are evil.*" Shakespeare has the same thought—as, indeed, what thought has he not?—and tells us that "when the searching eye of heaven, that lights this lower world, is hid behind the globe,"

Then thieves and robbers range abroad unseen
In murders and in outrage. . . .
But when from under this terrestrial ball
He fires the proud tops of the eastern pines,
And darts his light through every guilty hole,
Then murders, treason, and detested sins,
The cloak of night being pluck'd from off their backs,
Stand bare and naked, trembling at themselves.

In *Verses* 18-24 we have Job's answer to the question, What is the end, what the doom of these enemies of the light? And it is tolerably clear that in *Verses* 18-20 we have his conception of the end of the comparatively petty villains, such as the murderer, the adulterer, the thief, described in *Verses* 13-17; while in *Verses* 21-24 we have his conception of that of the tyrants—villains on a larger scale—depicted in *Verses* 2-12. But it is a moot point in which of two opposite senses we are to read these *Verses*. Many hold, it seems natural to hold, that as Job contemplates the course and end of the wicked, he sees that they are requited for their crimes even here; that he, therefore, virtually retracts his affirmation of God's indifference to the ways of men (Verse 12), and shews us in apt and graphic figures how the wicked are carried off as by a rushing flood, swallowed up by the ever-gaping mouth of Hades, and forgotten even by the mother who bare them; how, lulled into a false security for a while, they are broken like a tree seized in the fulness of its pride by a tempest, or cut off like the topmost ears of corn, which are the first to attract the eye of the reaper or of the passer-by.

But these Verses are at least susceptible of another interpretation. It may be that, instead of retracting, Job reaffirms and completes his charge of indifference against God. He may mean that the murderer, the adulterer, the thief, and the still baser tyrant, with all who share their enmity to the light, pass on their evil way unpunished; that they float lightly down the stream and current of time; and that then, before any just doom falls upon them, any stroke of retribution, they are swallowed up of Hades, just as the heated and thirsty earth swallows up the snow that falls upon it, dying a swift and painless death. If their memory is not cherished, so neither is the remembrance of their guilt. If the worms batten on them, as on all men, their iniquity, instead of being left to bear its proper and bitter fruit, is snapped suddenly in two, like a tree in the strong hands of a storm. They live in security. God's eyes beam on them. They recover health and prosperity even when, conscious of their crimes, they have despaired of life. And if, like other men, like all mankind, they are brought low when the span of life has run out, yet, like better men, after a life free from care and laden with honour, they die a natural and even an easy death, and are carried in like the shock when it is ripe, or even like the very finest of the wheat.

Of these two interpretations I cannot but think the latter to be the better, although I admit that it is quite easy to take objection to it. I prefer it, in part, because the most able Commentators incline to it; in part, because I find certain phrases and figures in these Verses which point very definitely to it, and feel it to be most consonant with the whole scope of the context; but, most of all, because it gives in another form the conclusion at which Job arrived in his last speech (*cf.* Chaps. xxi. 7-15 and 23-33), and he is here confessedly carrying on the line of thought which he started there. Once more, I conceive, he stands amazed and perplexed before a fact which has tried the faith of the good in all ages, that at least some of the wicked, as they observe no restraints in life, so also they have no bands in their death. This, indeed, is the standing problem of the Divine Providence, and it is therefore all the more likely that it was the problem which now recurred to Job's labouring thoughts.

Incidentally I have already explained most of the phrases and figures of speech contained in these Verses; but there are one or two which may still require a word.¹ Thus, the connection of thought in *Verse* 18 is still somewhat obscure. The point of comparison in the first line is the swiftness with which the wicked disappear from the scene: they are like a straw on the surface of the stream, hurried away by the rapid current. In the second line it is admitted that their heritage is cursed in the land; but in the third, the vanity of that curse is indicated—they are no longer there to feel the curse. They will no more walk along the familiar path to their vineyards, and, therefore, the belated curse does not seize on them: they have escaped the pursuing but tardy vengeance; they are long since in Hades.

The metaphors in *Verses* 19 and 20 carry on the same thought. If death be the end, if there be no retributive life beyond the grave, they are secure; they have vanished like snow falling on the thirsty Oriental earth; they have been broken off like a tree snapped by the storm.

In *Verse* 21, Job briefly characterizes the tyrants whom he had depicted more at large in *Verses* 2–12, in order that we may note the point of transition from the fate of the vulgar criminals to that of the cruel and rapacious despots. And their doom is even less retributive; for (*Verse* 24) it is *God* who gives them the immunity from punishment in which they trust—the eyes of God resting on their way, as though He approved both it and them. Instead of living in terror, as the Friends had affirmed, they are in security; instead of being overthrown, they are supported. God lifts them up, instead of bringing them low; and even when they die, they do but share the common lot; they are but cut off like corn that is ripe.

There was sufficient truth in the description to enable Job (*Verse* 25) to close with a challenge to the Friends, and defy

¹ In *Verses* 18, 20–23, the Poet uses the singular pronoun “he” collectively, personifying, as it were, the wicked class, or classes, which he has depicted. But as there is no doubt that he has the whole class—“rebels against the light”—in his mind, and as, moreover, he uses the plural in the other *Verses* of the passage, so that the transition only puzzles the English reader, I have thought it better to retain the plural (“they”) throughout.

them to disprove it. Exaggerated it was, no doubt; nor does it express, as we shall soon see, Job's real view of the doom and destiny of the wicked. But his descriptions, like those of the Friends, have to discharge a double, if not a divided, duty. They are arguments as well as pictures. Hence he naturally emphasizes, and even exaggerates, the facts of human life which the formula of the Friends will not cover, which their dogma will not explain, in order to convince them that it is erroneous and misleading. God has a solution of the problem, no doubt. Even Job has a solution of it, as he has shewn us in his confession of a retributive life beyond the grave. But the Friends have no solution of it, for they maintain a present and instant retribution. And yet here are large classes of men whose woes are unredressed, at least in this life, or whose crimes are unpunished! He may safely challenge *them* then to prove his "words of no worth."

In our study of his former speeches we have seen what great and precious spoils Job has carried off from his terrible conflict with doubt and despair; how he has risen to the conception of a God other and better than the God in whom he had once believed, and has laid hold on the hope of a life beyond the reach of death. And we ought not to close our examination of these two Chapters without remarking that he has now once more learned much, and gained much, from the things he has suffered. For, obviously, he has gained a wider and deeper sympathy with the woes and wrongs of men. He had never felt the miseries of the outcasts and serfs and vassals of his own land and tribe as he feels them now, or he could not have been content with the dogma he had so long held, that all suffering springs from sin. The facts were there—as numerous, as flagrant, as terrible as now; but he had not seen them, or had not seen the conclusion to which they pointed. Till now he could not say—

Oh, I have suffered
With those that I saw suffer!

or he would never have believed that men suffer no more than they deserve. His very creed indicates how little he knew

or felt of the calamities of the men about and beneath him; for

What need the bridge much broader than the flood?

and why should not a man be content with the bridge of dogma, however narrow it may be, which will cover the stream of facts beyond which he never looks?

But Job's own woes and griefs have made him sensitive to the woes and wrongs of others. New facts have taken possession of his mind, new depths of misery have yawned before his feet, and he must have a broader bridge if he is to cross them, a wider creed if he is to co-ordinate and explain them. The direful spectacle on which he has at last opened his eyes has "touched the very virtue of compassion in him." And this compassion, this enlarged sympathy with man, ever calling, as it must, for larger and truer thoughts of God and of the discipline and intention of his Providence—was not this in very deed great gain?

3. BILDAD TO JOB.

CHAPTER XXV.

The sententious and judicious Bildad has no reply to offer to the facts which Job has adduced. He tacitly admits that there *are* classes of men who are neither punished nor rewarded as they deserve; that habitual criminals and cruel despots do escape the stroke of justice; and that the wrongs endured by the serfs, vassals, outcasts of the tribes, often go unredressed: and with this admission his whole theory of Providence falls to the ground. From his point of view he can no longer

see a God employed

In *all* the good and ill that chequer life,

nor prove that "the procession of our fate, howe'er sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being of infinite benevolence and power." But though he has suffered a logical defeat, he is only "convinced against his will." He is as sure as ever that, though

he cannot account for the facts cited by Job, they are to be accounted for; that, though he cannot see God's hand in all the chequered good and ill of life, that Hand is at work in it all. He can argue for his general thesis no longer, nor can he bring any fresh charge against Job, or any fresh proof of the charges already alleged against him. And so he falls back on and repeats a common-place which Eliphaz had twice insisted on (Chap. iv. 17-21 and Chap. xv. 14-16), and which Job himself had twice admitted and confirmed (Chap. ix. 2 and Chap. xiv. 4), viz., the infinite distance and contrast between God and man. God is not only pure in Himself, but the source of all purity; and man is confessedly and universally impure: how, then, can any man reasonably hope, as Job evidently did hope, to justify himself before and against God?

To *this* complexion he has come at last, after all his moralizing, all his citation of ancient authorities, all his heats of passion and rebuke. And, seeing how set and stiff he is in his opinions, seeing that he still clings to them though he can no longer argue for them, one is tempted to ask, What is it that has reduced him to so lame and impotent a conclusion? Was he really perplexed by the facts adduced by Job, and compelled to admit within himself that he knew no answer to them? or was it Job's skilful appeal, in Chapter xxi. 29-34, to the antique sayings of many races as reported by "men of travel," sayings which Bildad loved so well, that beat him from his fence, and made him feel that in this keen encounter of adverse wits he was mastered at his own weapon, "hoist with his own petard"?

It is curious, too, that of all the Friends, Bildad should be left, or should be put forward, to confess their defeat. A man of conservative and rabbinical intellect is not usually more accessible to reason or authority than a man of prophetic temperament such as Eliphaz, or an irascible zealot such as Zophar. But such a one, though not more reasonable, is commonly less eager and fervent, and better able to fall back on well-worn truisms and vain repetitions. And so, it may be that, when defeat was inevitable, while Eliphaz was driven to the most passionate and baseless aspersions of Job's

character, and Zophar perhaps was choked with an indignation which rendered ordered speech impossible, Bildad was still cool enough to cover their retreat, as best he could, with a little cloud of irrelevant truisms.

It should also be remarked that though, in this the final speech made on behalf of the Friends, Bildad does venture to repeat truisms which had carried no argumentative force from the lips of Eliphaz, he does not venture to repeat the accusations with which he and his fellows had so often quickened in Job a too arrogant and peremptory sense of his own innocence. More than once I have had to point out that the Friends themselves had evidently but little faith in these accusations; that they charged him with sins which, on their theory, Job *ought* to have committed, rather than with sins of which they had any evidence. And now, in the last words they utter, as they tacitly confess themselves beaten in argument, so also they tacitly withdraw all their aspersions on the character of Job—thus making his victory complete. He is *not* “the sinner” they have so often pictured him, and therefore his sufferings are not the due reward and natural result of his sins.

With fine dramatic art the Poet will not suffer us to part from the Friends of Job while we are incensed against them by their censures of him. For, after all, they *are* his friends, and love him in their unloving way. In their way, too, they are the friends of God, and have been impelled into their sins against *Him*, as well as against Job, by a sincere concern for his honour. Hence Bildad's final words are at least inoffensive. He no longer criminales Job. He simply and briefly states a truth which, however stale and logically impertinent, might well be listened to without irritation, since Job had himself more than once illustrated and enforced it. So that if, heretofore, we have often been tempted to say, “Job was *afflicted* with friends,” or, still more strongly, “Job's *worst* affliction was his friends,” we are now compelled to reconsider our verdict, and to modify it.

CHAPTER XXV.

1. *Then answered Bildad the Shuchite and said :*

2. *Dominion and dread are with Him,*

- Author of Peace in his high places !*
3. *Is there any number to his hosts,*
 And upon whom doth not his light arise ?
4. *How then shall man be just with God,*
 Or how shall the woman-born be pure ?
5. *Behold, even the moon it doth not shine,*
 And the stars are not pure in his eyes !
6. *How much less that worm—a man,*
 And that creeping thing—the son of man !

Bildad does not so much as touch Job's argument that the guilty are not, or are not always, punished according to their deserts ; and, therefore, as part of this great controversy, his reply is logically impertinent. But though impertinent to the argument, it is pertinent to Job's mood ; for Job was once more longing to find his Judge, and counting on being acquitted by Him, if only he could find Him (Chap. xxiii. 3–12). “But *can* you count on that acquittal ?” replies Bildad. “Ah, think how great God is, how immaculate ! and how weak man is, and how impure !” It evaded Job's real complaint, viz., that *here* at least God did not judge men and render to them according to their deeds ; but it met Job's strong feeling of innocence, his passionate assertions of integrity, fairly enough, and honestly warned him, as indeed he had more than once warned himself, that in the light of the Divine Presence he might find in himself spots and stains which would not “leave their tinct.” It was all true, as Job found when Jehovah answered him out of the tempest, and he could only fling himself at the feet of his Judge, and exclaim, “Lo, I am vile !”

Verse 2.—God, argues Bildad, is “Author of Peace in his high places,” i.e., in the heights of heaven, among the celestial host. Even they are fallible, if they have not fallen ; hostility and rebellion are possible to them, even if they have not broken out. And therefore even the celestial armies—and why are they “armies” if they have nothing with which to contend ?—need, and have, a Judge who, sitting high above them, can control, command, and unite them.

Verse 3.—Those bright armies, or hosts, are innumerable ; but there is no soldier in their ranks who does not receive

his light—for the stars are the familiar emblem of the celestial spirits, and the one is often spoken of in the terms of the other—from God, and reflect it. They shine with borrowed rays. And if even *they* have no light, no glory, but from God (*Verse 4*), how can man, who is contaminated *by* his birth, as well as from it, possess any light of his own, any purity which will not grow dim and dark in the dazzling lustre of the Divine holiness, any righteousness which he dare assert against the immeasurable and infinite righteousness of God? If even the angelic armies in the heights of heaven submit to Him, must not any mere man, even the best and therefore the mightiest, contend with Him in vain?

Verse 5.—The very light of the sun is not so purely bright to human sense and thought as that of “the pale chaste moon” and the stars. Yet even this light, so pure to us, is not without stain to the pure and holy God. And (*Verse 6*) if the purest light of earth, that on which we cannot look without longing that some touch of its white calm radiance should penetrate and cleanse our hearts, is not “clean” before God, how much less can man, that worm creeping through the dust, be pure in his eyes? If the difference and distinction of quality between the awful and almighty Inhabitant of Eternity and the loftiest and greatest of his creatures be so vast, what must be the interval which separates *us* from Him?

This was Bildad’s argument. And it was all true—that is, from his point of view. Who has not felt, as *he* felt, the vastness and purity of the nightly heavens, and, reflecting on the number and order of the great orbs of light which float silently through the darkness, felt also the insignificance and meanness of man (Psalm viii.), or at least of one man, viz. himself? How vain and ignoble seem all the fret and fever of our life in the face of that divine tranquillity! How sordid and poor and confused are all the motions of our souls as contrasted with the steadfast order and immeasurable grandeur of the vast scene on which we gaze! At such moments, in such moods, it is natural for us to conceive of man as a mere worm creeping through the dust, and with dust for his meat. But we should wrong God our Maker,

even more heinously than ourselves, if we mistook that natural and emotional conception for an adequate and scientific conception of man's place in the universe. A being possessed of reason and conscience, and capable of righteousness and love, is more and better, not than many worms only, but than many worlds. And therefore we are guilty of a very gross and heinous sin against God if we habitually use the words of Bildad, and use them as setting forth the true nature and place of man in the eye of the Almighty. Mere almighty Power, with no Wisdom to guide and no Love to inspire it, looking down from the high vault of heaven, might regard men as mere worms of the dust. But God is Wisdom even more than He is Power, and Love even more than He is Wisdom. And hence we do not please Him, as Bildad thought to do, by depreciating man. It is not religious, but most irreligious, to think and speak of ourselves or our neighbours simply as sordid or impure. There is power in man as well as weakness, grandeur as well as meanness; virtue and piety are known to him as well as sin and impurity. And it is not commonly honest, much less pious, to close our eyes to one, and that the better, series of his qualities, and to fix our eyes solely on the other, or to speak of him as though he were all compact of evil.

4. JOB TO BILDAD.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Job has conquered the Friends. Bildad has virtually acknowledged their defeat. Instead of solving the problem they took in hand, they have but confused it by accusing Job of sins of which he was not guilty. Instead of proving, as they had undertaken to prove, that the sufferings of men in general spring from their sins, they have been compelled tacitly to admit that many sins provoke no present or adequate recompense, and that many sufferings are not provoked by the sins of those who endure them. To vindicate the justice

of God they have aspersed the character of man—inventing sins in Job which had no real or probable existence, ignoring facts in the lives of large classes of men which were too real to be denied. And now that the argument has come to an end, Job has no difficulty either in admitting the truth of the warning with which Bildad had closed it, or in shewing that it was utterly irrelevant. The universal sinfulness of man may be true, must be true, if the weak fallible nature of man is to be brought into contrast with the awful and immeasurable holiness of God: but what has that to do with a man who has been redeemed from his sins through his faith in God? It is very true that Job has not, consciously and adequately, solved the problem whether of his personal experience or of the general experience of humanity any more than the Friends. He can no more tell than they can tell why he has suffered, why so many suffer; but he has this immense advantage over them, that he has been true to the facts of the case, neither ignoring nor denying them; that he recognizes the problem which the facts suggest, and is trying so to frame it that a solution of it may become possible: and that he is looking to God, rather than to man, for the true and final solution of it. He has listened to all that the Friends can allege against him—to their charges, their insinuations, their urgent appeals to him to confess his sins and to implore the Divine forgiveness; and he can still say,

What I did, I did in honour,
Led by the impartial conduct of my soul;
And never shall you see that I will beg
A ragged and forestall'd remission,
If truth and upright innocency fail me.

He will not palter with himself by confessing sins which he has not committed, nor seek to escape his sufferings by feigning a penitence he cannot honestly feel. He is true to himself, and to all the facts within his view; and therefore there is hope for him, hope that the facts will at last yield their secret to him.

Nay, the facts *have* already, in some measure, yielded their secret, though he has not been able to grasp it and rest in it. For that great hope of a retributive life beyond the grave,

of which he has at least caught a glimpse, is a very sufficient solution of the logical problem which exercised his thoughts, though it is by no means a complete solution of the mystery of suffering. For sufferings have their good and happy results in this life as well as in that which is to come. Some of these results Elihu will hereafter point out to him ; others, Jehovah will force home upon his mind when He appears to close and crown the argument. But it was his truth, his loyalty to facts, and to all the facts, which prepared him for these disclosures. They could not have been made, they would have been made in vain, to the Friends who were playing fast and loose with the facts of human experience, "squaring their guess with shows," and deeming it all the worse for the facts if they did not accord with their theories and conjectures.

The veracious and generous spirit of the man is shewn in his treatment of Bildad's irrelevant truism. He does not question it because it comes back to him from the mouth of an opponent, or because that opponent thinks it tells against him. He does not even make light of it. On the contrary, he takes it up, and illustrates it with a freedom and fulness beyond Bildad's reach. When he longs to meet with God, he is not unmindful of the vast interval between God and man (Comp. Chap. xxiii. 6). He is quite sensible of the majesty of God, although it no longer makes him afraid. That majesty is to be seen, not only in the heavens, not only in and above the stars, but in the dim Hadean world which lies beneath the sea (Verses 5, 6), and in the earth which hangs suspended in space (Verse 7), in the waters of the firmament (Verses 8, 9) and in the waters of the sea (Verse 10), in storm (Verses 11, 12) and in calm (Verse 13). The whole natural universe is pervaded by the Divine Majesty, and yet can render only a faint and distant whisper of a Majesty which transcends the utmost limits of human thought.

CHAPTER XXVI.

1. *Then Job answered and said :*

2. *Wherein hast thou helped the weak
 Or succoured the feeble arm ?*

3. *In what hast thou counselled the unwise,
 And frankly imparted knowledge ?*
4. *To whom hast thou addressed thy speech,
 And whose spirit hath come forth from thee ?*
5. *The Shades tremble
 Beneath the waters and their inhabitants ;*
6. *Hades lieth bare before Him,
 And there is no covering to Abaddon.*
7. *He stretcheth out the North over the void,
 And hangeth the earth on nothing ;*
8. *He bindeth up the waters in his clouds,
 And the cloud is not burst beneath them :*
9. *He covereth the face of his throne,
 He spreadeth over it his cloud :*
10. *He draweth a circle upon the face of the waters
 To the bound where light toucheth darkness :*
11. *The pillars of heaven tremble
 And are amazed at his rebuke ;*
12. *By his power He agitates the sea,
 And He is of skill to smite its pride :*
13. *By his breath the heavens grow bright,
 And He woundeth the fleet Serpent :—*
14. *Lo, these are but the edges of his ways ;
 And how slight a whisper hath been heard of Him !
 But the thunder of his power, who can understand ?*

Verses 2-4.—Job commences his reply to Bildad in a tone of irony and disdain. He himself, as he afterwards tells us Chaps. xxix. and xxxi.), has often carried help to the weak, comfort to the afflicted, counsel to the perplexed. His claim to wisdom and benevolence is admitted by all the tribes. Has Bildad any such claim as this? is it admitted? can he make it good?

This is the general purport of these Verses; but, more particularly, we may note that in *Verses 2 and 3* Job virtually demands of him, "Do your words contain aught to succour me, whom you assume to be so weak? or to instruct me, whom you assume to be so ignorant?" while in *Verse 4* he demands both to whom the words are addressed and from whence they were derived, *i.e.*, he denies both their relevancy and their originality. *To whom?* Surely not to me, for your words have no bearing on my argument? *From whence?*

from me or from Eliphaz ? for very certainly you did not get them from God. Both Job (Chaps. ix. 2 and xiv. 4) and Eliphaz (Chaps. iv. 17-21 and xv. 14-16) had twice uttered the thought on which Bildad's brief declamation is based ; and Job now both charges him with having dressed himself in borrowed robes, and inquires from whose wardrobe they have been stolen ?

But at the close of Verse 4 this strain of irony comes to an end. Job pauses ; he turns from man to God, from whom alone *he* will derive his inspiration, and commences a strain of praise and adoration in which he is soon wholly absorbed. Bildad had extolled the majesty of God as the Ruler of the heavenly host, and in *Verse 5* Job takes up and expands the strain. Gathering his singing-robes about him, he chants a hymn of praise compared with which Bildad's is poor and tame indeed. God's rule extends, his majesty is to be seen, not in heaven alone, but throughout the universe,—in Hades, in the earth, in the sea, in all the changes and commotions of time. Job's tone is as much more lofty and fervent as his theme is wider than that of Bildad. And even in the Hebrew Psalter itself there are few nobler psalms than that which now breaks from his lips.

In *Verses 5 and 6* he celebrates the majesty of God as extending even to the dark kingdom of Hades, to the Abyss which lies far below the ocean, to the under-world in which the disembodied spirits of the innumerable dead are gathered together. Even the great and wide sea, with its multitude of inhabitants, cannot hide this subterranean realm from the Almighty. When He glances upon the dead, though the glory of his face must penetrate the depths of the intervening ocean to reach them, his majesty makes them afraid ; " the Shades tremble," or writhe like a woman in travail.

This allusion to Hades is curious and suggestive. It may be that Job's thoughts were carried straight to the under-world by the mere force of antithesis ; that, as Bildad had spoken of the majesty of God as it is revealed in the heights of heaven, Job's mind flew to the opposite pole of being, and dwelt on that majesty as revealed in the depths of the Abyss. But there may be more in it than this. Hades had been

much and often in his thoughts, especially since he had caught a glimpse of the great hope that Hades might be the scene of his trial and acquittal, the court in which he would meet and be vindicated by his Judge. And it may be that it was because he now looked on Hades as the true home of his spirit (Comp. Chap. xvii. 13-16) that he opens his psalm by affirming that God's presence is not confined to heaven, nor to earth, but reaches even to the unknown realm beneath the earth.

It is possible, though not probable, I think, that it was Bildad's mention of *the moon and stars* (Chap. xxv. 5) which suggested the thought of Hades. For among the earlier Greeks the moon, because it seemed to sink under the earth, was regarded as a Chthonian, or under-world, power, one of the deities that ruled in "hell;" and hence mystical symbols of the moon were placed in the grave, that "perpetual light might shine" on the spirits of the dead. And wherever Nature-worship prevails, it is so natural that men should regard the luminaries which rule the night as also ruling in the dark shades of death, as to render it possible that Job may have been familiar with this wide-spread superstition, as he was unquestionably familiar with many similar superstitions (Comp. Verses 12 and 13), and may have here permitted it to influence the form of his thought.

In *Verse 7* he rises from the under-world to the world itself, and sings the power of God as manifested in having "stretched out *the North* over the void;" i.e., in stretching the northern sky, the pole round which the whole vault of heaven revolves, over the vast empty spaces of the atmosphere; and in "hanging the earth *upon nothing*," i.e., hanging it self-poised in space. Many Commentators are charmed with the truth and accuracy of this description, and triumphantly exclaim: "How Job knew the truth, demonstrated by astronomy, that the earth hangs self-poised in empty space, is a question not easily answered by those who deny the inspiration of holy Scripture."¹ But nothing can be more unreasonable or perilous than to claim the inspiration of God for the physical theories of Hebrew poetry. It pro-

¹ "The Speaker's Commentary," *in loc.*

ceeds on an entire misconception of the nature and value of Inspiration, and exposes the Bible to irresistible assaults from the side of science. For if Job were inspired because he knew the earth to be hung on nothing, then surely he was not inspired because he believed it to be a vast plain, or because he believed (Verse 13) the eclipses of the sun to be the work of a great dragon who was bent on devouring it. To insist on scientific accuracy as a criterion of Inspiration is really to give up the inspiration of the Bible, for its physical theories are at least as often inaccurate as they are accurate; and if we may claim them as arguments *for* the Bible when they are confirmed by science, then surely our opponents may fairly claim them as arguments *against* the Bible when science disproves them.

In *Verses* 8-10 Job attributes the gathering and spreading of the heavily-laden clouds which precede a storm to the power of God. Heavily-laden though they be, they do not burst beneath their burden and discharge it until He gives the signal (*Verse* 8). They sail through the sky, above which He abides unseen, and through which some rays of his glory shine down upon men, veiling his throne from us with their dense vapours (*Verse* 9), that extend in an ever-expanding circle until they reach the farthest horizon of the sea, "which marks the exact limits of light and darkness." For the ancients believed that the earth was surrounded by the ocean, and that on the other side of the ocean the region of eternal darkness commenced. *This* was the bound where, according to Job, "light and darkness touched."

Having described the portents and gathering of the storm, in *Verses* 11 and 12, he describes the breaking of the storm on the agitated earth. "The pillars of heaven," *i.e.*, the high mountains on which the sky seems to rest, "tremble" and writhe; the thunder, which echoes and re-echoes among them in long reverberating peals, is the voice of their astonishment and terror at God's rebuke. Torn by the fierce winds, the sea is agitated to its depths; it tosses up its arms and lifts up its voice on high, thundering back to the thundering mountains, and is wounded in its pride, by the stroke of the tempest, to the very quick.

Verse 13.—The calm succeeds to the storm, and this, too, is the work of God, a revelation of his power and majesty. The clear bright wind, which disperses the clouds and restores to the azure sky its serenity and beauty, is his breath. It is his hand which smites the fleet serpent or flying dragon. Now “the Dragon” was the name given by the ancients to one of the most sinuous and straggling of the constellations. It winds between the Lesser and the Greater Bear, and stretches well-nigh half across the Polar Circle. And this constellation (Comp. on Chap. iii. 8) is another of those popular personifications of the evil principle of which we have just had an example in Verse 12.¹ According to the ancient mythology, it is the Dragon, or Serpent, which eclipses the sun by winding itself round it, and seeking to devour it. Were not God to wound the monster and compel it to flee, darkness would usurp the place of light. And the Poet here uses this symbol, I suppose, to express the conflict which, like St. Paul (Rom. viii. 19–23), he saw even in the physical universe,—the conflict between light and darkness, between evil and good, in a creation made subject, against its will, to vanity and corruption. He was aware of an evil power at work around him averse to all goodness, the enemy of all light. And it is God’s final and conclusive triumph over this fell power which he celebrates, a triumph which brings back order and peace, and the lustre of an ever-renewed brightness, to the agitated heart and the agitated world.

Verse 14.—Even these revelations of the Divine Majesty in heaven and Hades, in earth and sky and sea, in tempest and in calm, render but the faintest outlines, the mere edges of it. The most magnificent utterances of the physical universe, and its sublimest victories, are but the mere whisper of a Power the full thunder of whose voice the ear of man cannot hear nor his heart conceive. As God is dark to us

¹ Verse 12.—“And by his skill he smiteth *Rahab*,” is the literal rendering of the last line. The original word is that used in Job ix. 13. In the comment on that Verse I have explained that “*Rahab*” was an ancient personification of the principle of evil. The term might therefore be well applied to the sea, by an Arab or a Hebrew, to both of whom the mighty restless sea was an object of fear and abhorrence.

only through excess of light, so also He is silent only through excess of sound—because He speaks with a too mighty voice—and absent only through an excess of presence which renders Him invisible to creatures such as we are in such a world as this.

In this noble psalm, then, Job shews that his whole soul is possessed by the truth which Bildad affected to teach him, and that this truth awakens in him musical echoes and responses of which Bildad himself was utterly incapable.

Here the controversy with the Friends comes to a close. Bildad has so little to say when he last speaks, that we are prepared to find that Zophar has nothing to say. Job's victory over them in this final Colloquy is complete, conspicuous. While admitting most of the facts on which they rely, he has refuted the inference which they have drawn from them; and in his turn he has adduced facts which, on their hypothesis, they cannot explain, which they do not venture even to touch. He has driven the venerable Eliphaz to mere calumny and detraction, drawn the scholastic Bildad away from his maxims and authorities, and reduced even confident Zophar to a wondering and indignant silence.

And all the while he himself has been less ironical, less severe, less passionate, than before. The great hope which has sprung up in his soul, and which has renewed and established his faith in God, if it finds no direct expression in this Colloquy, at least expresses itself indirectly in his more composed and assured tone.

The fact is we crossed the watershed of this great controversy at the close of the last Colloquy, when Job cut his memorable inscription on the eternal rock, and looked down for a moment with open eyes into the depths of the Abyss, and saw in it, with astonishment and joy unutterable, a busy scene of moral and retributive life, a world more justly ordered, and glowing with a Divine light. Since then we have been descending from those dizzy heights to the plain in which Job may speak out all his heart without check or interruption, and Elihu may speak out his heart, and even Jehovah may speak out his. The polemic forms are still maintained for a

while, throughout this Colloquy indeed ; but the polemic life and fire have gone out of them. And now we are about to enter on a yet more tranquil scene. The voices we shall hear henceforth are not so shrill with passion nor so quick with agony. Even Job himself only once falls back into his old tone of piercing grief and passionate incrimination ; for the most part he maintains a tone of pensive meditation and regret ; and even from his single outburst of passion he quickly rises into his finest and most perfect self-delineation, into his firmest and most assured confidence.

The most lovely and winning sections of his Poem, for it grows in beauty, though not in dramatic interest, to the very end, still lie before us ; but its more dramatic and tragic sections, as also its more difficult and argumentative, lie behind us. We shall have more to admire, less to puzzle over. We have crossed the troubled sea, and shall now sail up a broad and tranquil stream, not wholly unvexed with rapids and currents of its own indeed, but still rich in fair scenes and quiet havens of repose.

SECTION VI.
THE SOLILOQUY OF JOB.

CHAPTERS XXVII.—XXXI.

WE have followed the polemic of Job with the Friends to its close. We have seen how, as they grew more definite and personal in their charges and more vehement in their invective, he has grown more profoundly conscious of his innocence, and less vehement, though not less steadfast, in asserting it. And now the conflict is over. Job has silenced—silenced rather than convinced—his antagonists; and, as they sit dumb before him, he breaks into a Soliloquy so elevated and sustained, that almost all the critics regard it as one of the most lovely and exquisite sections of this great Poem. Godet, indeed, speaks of it as “a burst of poetry never surpassed,” as “the most admirable section of the whole book,” and maintains that, “although much the hardest to interpret, it is nevertheless the most accessible to the chastened spirit.”

This Soliloquy, which extends from Chapter xxvii. to Chapter xxxi., is divided into two Monologues; the first embracing Chapters xxvii. and xxviii., and the second, Chapters xxix.—xxxi. Each of these Monologues is introduced with the phrase, “Job took up his *strain*,” the Hebrew word for “strain”—which is sometimes translated by “oracle,” and sometimes by “parable”—covering all discourse of an elevated, picturesque, or poetic tone; so that the Poet himself forewarns us that he is about to attempt a higher than his usual style, to stir and quicken our imagination with words and tropes that we shall not willingly let die.

He has hardly made the promise before he begins to fulfil it. His mind takes a more reflective turn; his pencil is

dipped in richer hues: he calls a pause in the action of his drama, and utters a more "lyrical cry." As we listen to him we feel that the polemic storm has swept past; the air grows clearer; the birds break forth into singing: and if at times an occasional gust or ground-swell reminds us that the day has been one of wind and tempest, we are nevertheless aware that the storm will not return, that the wind-vexed day is settling into an evening-calm rich with the gorgeous yet tender and pathetic hues of sunset. Now and then, indeed, Job reverts, with a quick movement of indignation, to the charges alleged against him by the Friends; and once at least he cries out against the injustice of Heaven; but, for the most part, he bears himself with composure and maintains a contemplative mood.

It is easy to see that the Poet has thoroughly enjoyed this part of his work, and put his whole heart into it. He lingers over the themes, over the illustrations even of the themes, he handles; he elaborates the pictures he paints—as, for example, that of the Miner in Chapter xxviii, or that of the Aborigines in Chapter xxx.—adding line to line and touch to touch, as if he were loth to leave them. Contrasting his present with his previous mood, his meditative with his controversial mood, we are reminded of that exquisite and musical passage in the "Two Gentlemen of Verona" in which Julia describes the course and changes of her passion:—

The current that with gentle murmur glides,
Thou knowest, being stopped, impatiently doth rage:
But, when its fair course is not hinder'd,
He makes sweet music with the enameled stones,
Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge
He overtaketh in his pilgrimage;
And so by many winding nooks he strays,
With willing sport, to the wild ocean.

We have seen him raging and chafing impatiently against the arguments of the Friends, and now we shall have to linger with him in many a winding nook—the inventory of gems, for instance, and the studied use of the various Hebrew names for "gold" in Chapter xxviii. Verses 15-19, or the elaborated image of a military siege in Chapter xxx. Verses 11-15; and to listen to the "sweet music" he makes as he sings, in

Chapters xxix. and xxxi., of the happy days when God “kept” him, and by *his* light he walked through darkness.

But if the charm of the Soliloquy is very apparent, so also are the difficulties of which Godet speaks. Those Commentators who are nothing if they are not critical, and even those in whom the critical prevails over the expository function, are very busy in this section of the Poem, detecting inconsequences of thought, rearranging the order of the Verses, or even putting them into other mouths than those of Job; the “higher criticism” being here, as too often elsewhere, mainly a censure of the author it examines or of the editors and commentators who have gone before it. By simply accepting the Poem as it stands, and patiently studying the intention and relation of its parts we shall find, I hope, that no such heroic remedies, no such hazardous reconstructions, are required; that there is a truer order in the accepted form of this Soliloquy, and a finer meaning, than in any of the rearrangements of it by the critics whose “end” is too often “destruction,” even when their aim is, as they phrase it, reconstructive.

Looking at the Soliloquy as a whole, with a view to ascertain its true place and function in the Poem, there are three points which call for remark: (1) its connection with the controversy which has preceded it; (2) its connection with the discourse of Elihu which follows it; and (3) the conclusion in which, unaided as yet by God or man, Job settles down at the close of the controversy with his Friends.

1. As the waves of strife subside and the voices of reproach are hushed, Job sinks—*rises*, rather—into a calmer, a more composed and reasonable, mood. Irritated by their “maxims of ashes,” resolute to demolish their “strongholds of clay,” (Chap. xiii. 12), he had done some injustice to the arguments of the Friends, and had pushed his own counter-arguments to a point of excess at which they also grew to be untrue. But now that he has refuted and silenced them, now that he is sufficiently at leisure from himself to weigh the discussion fairly, he candidly admits both what had been true in their contention, and what had been untrue, because excessive, in his own. He still holds fast to his integrity

(Chap. xxvii. 1-6), and sets it forth, with exquisite pathos, in that lovely picture of his "autumn days" contained in Chapters xxix. and xxxi. So, too, the sense of his misery still abides with him; he gives a new and most moving description of it in Chapter xxx., depicting himself as the offscouring of all things, the scorn of men whom all men scorned. And he still stands to it that he has done nothing to provoke or deserve his misery; that he has been grievously wronged: he exclaims at his wrong (Chap. xxvii. 2; xxx. 20-26), and both demands and implores redress from the Almighty (Chap. xxxi. 35-37). But he admits that in the history and experience of man there are clear tokens of that Divine Providence, and especially of that Law of Retribution, which he had called in question; that, *as a rule*, the wicked do not thrive, and that, *in the end*, the righteous do. Even now he does not grant, what the Friends had contended for, that all good men have easy lives, while all bad men are instantly punished for their sins, and that therefore loss and suffering are always proofs and effects of the Divine displeasure. But he confesses that the real and ultimate doom of the wicked—their "*doom from God*," their "*heritage from the Almighty*," (Chap. xxvii. 13), *i.e.*, the *ideal* doom to which their actual fate is always tending—is perdition; that they cannot for ever escape the pursuing Nemesis of their character and deeds, but must, sooner or later, be overtaken by it (Chap. xxvii. 8-23); and thus he paves the way for the admission that the exceptions to the retributive rule, which he had been tempted to rate as themselves the rule, are *only* exceptions to it, and that even these exceptions may be consistent with the Divine Justice and Goodness. He does not even yet see *how* they can consist with those attributes indeed; but what of that? Man, wise and inventive as he is on a lower plane, is utterly unable to comprehend and vindicate the ways of God; he may dig into the earth and detect its hidden stores, but he cannot climb into heaven and penetrate the very bosom of God. Wisdom belongs to Him alone; and man approaches wisdom only as he lives in the fear of God and hates the evil which He condemns (Chap. xxviii.). And so Job reaches,

though by a somewhat different road, and to a very different end, the conclusion of Modern Science—that, while the faculties of man fit him for the investigation of physical phenomena, and enable him to turn them to account, he is unable, by searching, to find out God, to grasp the Eternal Substance, or Force, or Will, which lies behind the phenomena and informs them.

2. But while meditating on the controversy in which he had engaged with the Friends, while determining and formulating the conclusions to which it has led him, Job is also preparing the way for the advent of the next actor on the scene, for the intervention of Elihu. When *he* speaks, Elihu, as we shall see, is indignant with the Friends because they cannot defend God without accusing Job, and with Job because he cannot defend himself without accusing God. He is sure that there must be some better way, some *via media*, some course by taking which they may steer clear both of the whirlpools and of the rocks. The sufferings of the good *must* have an intention consistent at once with the justice of God and the integrity of man. And it surely is a subtle and admirable stroke of art that, before Elihu appears we should be prepared for his advent by the frank admissions and modified conclusions of Job. For, in confessing his own ignorance, the impossibility that man should apprehend more than the bare “edges” of God’s ways, and by granting that Wisdom dwells with God alone, he does virtually admit that God may, and must, have an intention such as that for which Elihu afterward contends in imposing loss and suffering on the upright and the good.

3. It is but fitting, moreover, that we should learn how far Job was able to go *alone*, without help, whether from God or man; to what conclusion he was able to come when, no longer driven to passionate exaggeration by the excitements of controversy, he could adopt all that was substantially true in the arguments of the Friends and discard all that savoured of excess in his own arguments. This conclusion, stated with singular pomp and elaboration in Chapter xxviii., is a very remarkable one. It is remarkable for two reasons: (a) for its blended sublimity and

humility, and (β) because it is but "the abstract and brief chronicle" of Job's own character and life.

(a) In face of the great mysteries by which he is surrounded and perplexed, he concludes that "the place of Understanding" is beyond the reach or ken of man; that Wisdom dwells with God, and, if it come to them at all, can only "come" *from Him* to men; and that, so far as it has come, "the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to eschew evil, that is understanding." With a proud humility, with a strange blending of loftiness and lowliness, he confesses that man is wise, not as he comprehends and can vindicate the ways of God, but in proportion as he reverentially submits to them and adopts them for his own, pursuing that which God has pronounced good, eschewing that which He has condemned as evil. And though to some minds this definition of Wisdom may seem indefinite and mystical, it may be doubted whether any finer or more practical definition of it is even yet to be attained, whether it is not at bottom accepted alike by sceptic and believer.¹

(β) Sublime as it is and worthy of all acceptance, it is, after all, only an abstract translation of the moral character of Job himself, a point somewhat hidden from us by the fact that in our Authorized Version the same Hebrew are not rendered by the same English words. In Chapter i. Verse 8, and again in Chapter ii. Verse 3, Job is described by Jehovah Himself as "one that *feareth God* and *escheweth evil*." And in Chapter xxviii. Verse 28, the secret of true Wisdom is described in these very words, "*Lo, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to eschew evil* (Authorized Version, "to depart from evil"), that is understanding." So that, in God's eye, *Job* was the very wise man whom he here describes, though of all men he himself would have been most surprised to hear it.

But while this end and conclusion is stated with rare elaboration, and with solemn and impressive beauty, in Chapter xxviii., we should not give it its due weight did we not observe that, besides its formal statement in this Chapter, it really pervades and dominates this whole section

¹ See Commentary on Chap. xxviii. 28.

of the Poem. The way is prepared for it even in Job's final answer to Bildad (Chap. xxvi.), in which he sets forth the universal presence and rule of God in a strain of unusual grandeur, acknowledging and insisting that the Divine Majesty is to be seen, not in heaven alone, but also in Hades, in the earth, in the waters of the firmament and in the waters of the sea, in storm and calm, and in all the events and changes of time. To grasp and comprehend that Majesty is impossible; it is at once too subtle and too vast. We can but see "the edges of God's ways;" we can but hear "a slight whisper" of his voice: the full volume and "thunder of his power" is wholly beyond us. This is the prelude to the noble strain of Chapter xxviii., and is set in the same key with it. And the same strain underlies all the variations of the Chapters which succeed it. Since the fear of the Lord is at once the beginning and the end of wisdom, the fellowship and favour of the Lord must be the sum and crown of human blessedness. It is the loss of this fellowship which we shall hear Job most of all deploring (Chaps. xxix.—xxxi); it is the recollection of this fellowship which throws the most winning light on the happy days "when the favour of God was on his tent;" it is the restoration of this fellowship which he craves above all else. No less than six times in the brief compass of four Verses (Chap. xxix. 2–5) does he refer to it as the crowning felicity of his happier estate; and, throughout the Second Monologue, it is either the memory of that Divine communion, or the longing to recover it, which rules his thoughts and gives form and colour to his words.

FIRST MONOLOGUE.

CHAPTERS XXVII. AND XXVIII.

CHAP. XXVII. 1.—*Then Job took up his strain and said :*

2. *As God liveth, who hath denied me justice,
And the Almighty, who hath embittered my soul,*
3. *All the while my breath is in me,*

4. *And the spirit of God in my nostrils,
 My lips shall not speak iniquity,
 Nor my tongue utter deceit !*
 5. *Be it far from me to grant that you are in the right ;
 Till I breathe my last I will not give up my integrity :*
 6. *I hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go ;
 My heart shall not upbraid me so long as I live.*
 7. *May my foe be like the wicked,
 And he that riseth up against me like the impious ;*
 8. *For what can the impious hope for, though he get him gain,
 When God shall require his soul !*
 9. *Will God hear his cry
 When trouble cometh upon him ?*
 10. *Can he delight himself in the Almighty,
 And at all times invoke the Most High ?*
 11. *I will teach you of the hand of God,
 I will not hide that which is with the Almighty.*
 12. *Behold, ye yourselves have all seen it ;
 Why then speak ye thus vainly ?*
 13. *This is the doom of the wicked man from God,
 And this the heritage of oppressors from the Almighty :—*
 14. *If his children be multiplied, it is for the sword,
 And his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread ;*
 15. *His survivors shall be buried by the Pest,
 And their widows shall not bewail them :*
 16. *Though he heap up silver like dust,
 And gather robes as mire,*
 17. *That which he hath gathered shall the righteous wear,
 And the innocent shall divide his silver :*
 18. *He buildeth his house like a moth,
 And as a booth which the keeper of a vineyard runneth up :*
 19. *He lieth down rich, but it is for the last time ;
 When he openeth his eyes he is no more :*
 20. *Terrors overtake him like a flood,
 A whirlwind filcheth him away by night ;*
 21. *The East wind catcheth him up and he is gone,
 It hurleth him out of his place :*
 22. *God shall cast evils upon him, and spare not,
 Though he would fain escape out of his hand ;*
 23. *Men clap their hands at him,
 And hiss him out of his place.*

- And a place for the gold which men wash out ;
 2. Iron may be taken from the earth,
 And the rock be smelted for copper.
 3. [The miner] maketh an end of darkness,
 And searcheth through all its limits
 For the stones of darkness and of the blackness of death ;
 4. He sinketh a shaft far from the habitations of men,
 He is forgotten of those who walk above,
 He swingeth suspended afar from men :
 5. The underparts of the earth, out of which cometh forth bread,
 Are stirred up as if by fire :
 6. The rocks are the sapphire's bed,
 And yield him gold-dust.
 7. That path ! no bird of prey knoweth it,
 Nor hath the eye of the hawk scanned it ;
 8. No proudly-pacing beast hath trodden it,
 Nor lion passed by upon it.
 9. He putteth forth his hand against the quartz,
 He turneth up the mountains from their base ;
 10. He cutteth out canals among the rocks,
 And his eye detecteth every precious thing ;
 11. He bindeth up waters so that they weep not,
 And bringeth that which is hidden to light.
 12. But Wisdom—where shall she be gotten ?
 And where is the place of Understanding ?
 13. Man knoweth not her haunt,
 For she is not to be found in the land of the living
 14. The abyss saith, " She is not in me ; "
 And the sea saith, " Nor with me : "
 15. Choice gold cannot purchase her,
 Nor silver be weighed out as her price ;
 16. She cannot be bought with the ingot of Ophir,
 With the precious onyx and the sapphire ;
 17. Bright gold and crystal cannot compete with her,
 Nor can she be bartered for vessels of fine gold ;
 18. No mention shall be made of diamonds or gems,
 And the price of Wisdom is beyond pearls ;
 19. The topaz of Cush cannot compare with her,
 Nor shall she be weighed with pure gold.
 20. Whence, then, shall Wisdom come,
 And where is the place of Understanding,
 21. Since it is hidden from the eyes of all living,
 And kept close from the fowl of heaven ?
 22. Abaddon and Death say,

- “ *Only the rumour of it hath reached our ears !* ”
23. *God understandeth the way thereof,*
 And He—He knoweth its place ;
24. *For He looketh to the ends of the earth,*
 And seeth all that is under heaven.
25. *When He made a weight for the wind,*
 And meted out the waters by measure ;
26. *When He made a law for the rain,*
 And a pathway for the flash with its voice of thunder,
27. *Then He beheld and declared it,*
 He gave it its place and tested it :
28. *And to man He said, “ Lo, the fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom,*
 And to eschew evil, that is Understanding.”

CHAPTER XXVII. *Verses 2-4.* The First Monologue opens with an oath. This oath—“as God liveth”—is the first we hear from the lips of Job, and appropriately introduces the more rich and elevated music of this high “strain.” He summons Jehovah, his “Witness” and his “Redeemer,” to attest his integrity, even while “he professes to have received but sinister measure from his Judge.” This faith in the justice of the God who has “denied him justice,” and in the goodness of the God who has “embittered his soul,” while it is a special note of Job’s character, is not unknown to many who since his day have been perplexed and saddened by the wrongs of time. He does but glance in passing, however, at the fact that God has been moved against him “without cause”—a charge which Jehovah Himself confesses to be true (Chap. ii. 3), and which, therefore, we cannot well blame Job for asserting. It is his integrity, and not his wrongs, by which his thoughts are occupied for the moment ; and what he emphatically affirms in these Verses is that, as surely as God lives and as long as he himself lives, he will not blemish his integrity by stooping to the “iniquity” and “deceit” of confessing sins of which he is unconscious or of which he is consciously innocent. He lives only by the “breath” or “spirit” of God, which, breathed into his nostrils, made him “a living soul :” to be untrue to himself would be to sin against that “spirit,” and so to forfeit his true life.

This reaffirmation of his integrity he proceeds to develop in *Verses 5 and 6* ; and if the assertion of his righteousness

sound overbold, we must remember both that he asserts it only against the utterly unfounded charges of the Friends, and that even a Christian Apostle, who confessed himself to be the "chief" of sinners, could also say (1 Cor. iv. 4), "*I know nothing against myself*;" *i.e.*, he was utterly unconscious of any wilful guilt, any guilt of which *men* could fairly charge him, while yet he admitted that he was not thereby "justified" before the Lord. So Job, as he confronts men, can honestly say, "My heart does not reproach any of my days, and shall not so long as I live," and yet, when bending before God, confess, "I am vile."

Verse 7 is a point of transition; and however we translate it—and it is so charged with emotion as to be very difficult to convey from one language to another—it must not be taken as an imprecation, but rather as affirming that it is not Job himself, but his enemies and gainsayers, those who branded him as wicked, who are really wicked; it is they who, in condemning him, condemn themselves. And hence, though the Verse is emotional and ejaculatory in form, we shall do well to take as at least an alternative rendering of it:—

It is my foe who is like the wicked,
And he that riseth up against me who is like the impious.

From this Verse onward some critics, from Verse 13 onward many critics, assume, simply from internal evidence, that words are put into Job's mouth which really belong to Zophar; that, in fact, we have here that third speech of his, of which, as the Poem stands, we have no record; or that, at least, Job is here stating the view held by the Friends, and not his own view. There are, however, many reasons in the structure of these Verses which render any such theory improbable, though with these we need not concern ourselves, since a really careful and sympathetic study of the Verses proves them to be perfectly appropriate—necessary even to the development of the Poem—in the mouth of Job, and shews the conjectures of the "higher criticism" to be wholly unnecessary.¹ It is quite true that, in opposition to the

¹ Perhaps I may take this opportunity of recommending those who have been distressed and perplexed by the way in which this school has handled

Friends, Job had argued that the wicked often pass their days in mirth and affluence, and end them by a sudden and painless death. But he nowhere affirms, as we have seen (*Vide* Comments on Chaps. xxi. and xxiv.), that *all* the wicked are thus fortunate, or, in a deeper sense, unfortunate, or that a due retribution *never* overtakes them; so that he may now very consistently give us the darker, as before he had given us the lighter, aspect of their lot. And, moreover is a man, a man, too, who "above all other strifes contends to know himself," to learn nothing from experience, from long and painful meditation on human character and destiny? Is a poet, and a poet who "takes all knowledge for his province," to conduct a long and intricate argument without advancing toward his conclusion, or even without holding any conclusion in view? is he, "like the damned in the Grecian Tartarus, to spin for ever on the same wheel, round the same pivot"? Surely we might fairly have blamed the Poet, as deficient both in the dramatic instinct and in the art of reasonable discussion, if he had *not* portrayed Job as advancing, through meditation and discussion, and above all under the pressure of painful and wider experience, to larger and more settled views of human destiny; and as making that advance mainly when the confusing excitements of controversy were subsiding, and the voice of reason could be more clearly heard.

the Bible, and especially the poetry of the Bible, to study their treatment of the great masters of classical and modern times—Shakespeare, for instance, and Virgil. Their feeble, contradictory, and ludicrous assumptions and conclusions on this lower range of literature are the best tonic for any who tremble lest the Bible should ultimately suffer harm or loss at their hands. Mr. Myers has exposed their arrogance and absurd incompetency in a very able article on Virgil in "The Fortnightly Review," from which I take a single brief extract. "Thus one of them objects to Dido's 'auburn tress' on the ground that a widow's hair *should be* of a darker colour! Another questions whether a broken heart can be properly termed 'a fresh wound,' if a lady has been suffering from it for *more than a week!*" While Ribbeck, one of the highest critics of this higher school, "alters the text of Virgil, in defiance of all the manuscripts, because the poet's picture (*Æneid* xii. 55) of Amata, 'self-doomed to die, clasping for the last time her impetuous son-in-law,' seems to him tame and unsatisfactory. By the alteration of *monitura* into *monitura*, he is able to represent Amata as clinging to Turnus, not 'with the intention of killing herself,' but 'with the intention of giving advice,' *which he considers as the more impressive and fitting attitude for a mother-in-law!*"

And in these Verses Job does, as has been said, both modify, or complete, his view of the lot of the wicked, and state it more temperately, adopting whatever he felt to be true in the contention of the Friends. But it is to be observed that, while Job in part adopts that contention, he holds it with a vital difference, draws a wholly opposite conclusion from it, and turns it *against* the very position which they had assumed. He grants what they had affirmed, what he himself had questioned, that to be wicked is to be miserable, though even yet he does not affirm, as they had done, either that to be wicked is to be in all cases *instantly* miserable, or that *all* the miserable must be wicked. But why does he grant it? Only to refute their inference from it. They had held up the doom of the wicked before him as a mirror in which he was to *see himself*, and confess that *he* was wicked; and now he holds up this selfsame mirror before them, that *they may see themselves* in it, and confess that it is not he, but his traducers and gainsayers (See Note on Verse 7) who are really wicked in the sight of God. To take these Verses from the mouth of Job, and to put them into the lips of Zophar or any of the Friends, is therefore to shew an entire misapprehension of their true scope and meaning. The critics who are guilty of it simply condemn themselves as lacking in the literary instinct and power on which they found their claim to a "higher criticism" than that of their fellows.

These general remarks furnish the key to the whole Chapter. From this point of view, what *Verses* 7-12 really come to is this: "I cannot and will not belie my conscience by confessing the sins with which you have charged me. It is not *I* that am wicked, but *you* who rise up against me with censures for which you can adduce no proof, which you simply infer from the calamities laid upon me. Your pictures of the doom of the wicked man are not true of me; for while *he* has no hope in his death, *I* look for a judgment to come, in which my integrity will be vindicated and my wrongs redressed: while *he* cannot call upon God in his trouble, *I* am incessantly calling on Him, and beseeching Him to shew Himself to me: while *he* cannot delight himself in God, *I* feel his favour to be life, and his loving kindness

better than life. *His* lot is not mine; his doom is not mine. What his real heritage is, his 'heritage from the Almighty,' I will teach you, though indeed ye have all seen it for yourselves and proclaimed it. Why, then, having seen it, do ye thus vainly contend that my lot resembles his?"

To this general interpretation of the Verses nothing need be added, perhaps, except a brief note on *Verse* 8. The word here used for "gain" denotes "*wrongful gain*," the implication being that all that the wicked acquire is wrongfully acquired, does not properly belong to them, has at least the evil taint which rests on the possessions of those who "love money" and make it their god. The word translated "*require*"—a fine strong word, very suitable here, when we remember the meaning put into it by Him who said, "This night shall thy soul be *required* of thee"—means literally to "draw out," and implies that the reluctant soul of the opulent but unrighteous man will be drawn out of the body to which it clings, as a rusty sword is drawn from its rusted scabbard: the line might be rendered, "When God shall *unsheath* his soul," and in that rendering of it, it is rife with food for meditation. But the most noticeable point in the Verse is "the instinctive and ineradicable faith" in an after-life implied in it. Quite unconsciously, Job betrays how deeply the conviction expressed in the Monumental Inscription (Chap. xix. 23-27) had entered into his soul, how profoundly he now believed that "there is another comfort than this world." For if there were no retributive life to come, how could there be any question of what a man may hope for "when God shall require his soul"? And yet how carelessly, as it were, how naturally and instinctively, how much as matter of course, Job assumes that even the godless man has *something* to look for at that supreme moment!

Verses 13-23 contain Job's formal and final statement of the doom and heritage of the wicked man; that which pertains to him by a Divine decree, *i.e.*, by a natural propriety and fitness; that ideal destiny which is in the mind of the Almighty, and will sooner or later come from it; that doom which is the proper and natural issue of his character and ways in the judgment of God, and which must therefore be

reached at last. Just as Shakespeare makes Gratiano say to the still wealthy "Merchant of Venice,"

You have too much respect upon the world
They lose it that do buy it with much care :

so Job declares of the wicked man, however prosperous he may be for the moment, that the general law of his case is, that those who gain wealth and power unjustly, who "fear not God nor regard man," lose, and must lose, what they have bought with so much care and pains. There is a doom in their very deeds; their very character doth "presage some ill event;" they may escape it for a time, and for a long time, but in due time they infallibly get their due.

So far Job modifies his former statements. Whereas he had spoken of the wicked as not receiving the due reward of their deeds, at least in their own persons and during the brief span of time (Chap. xxi. 19-21), that "ceaseless lackey of eternity," he now admits that, despite apparent exceptions, the law of retribution holds good, that it *is* the law, that God has appointed and will execute it. Looking out on human life as a whole, he confesses that to be bad *is* to be miserable and accursed, that sin carries its own penalty within itself; and to this thesis he gives a highly wrought and highly coloured expression. Sword, Famine, and Pestilence are, according to him, the three avenging furies which pursue and overtake the proud self-confident sinner, and even his offspring and survivors (*Verses 14 and 15*): and no doubt he selects these three—Pestilence, Famine, Sword—because they were the calamities most common in the East and most "feared of man." He *had* complained that the wicked "send forth their children like a flock" (Chap. xxi. 11); he now confesses that, numerous as they may be, they are all "for the sword." He had complained that their "loins were full of fat" (Chap. xxi. 24); he now admits that they "shall not be satisfied with bread." He had complained that no scourge of God fell on them, that they were borne to the tomb with pomp and that watch was kept over their pile (Chap. xxi. 9, 32); he now foresees and admits that they will be smitten by the pestilence; nay, in a fine impersonation, he depicts

them as "*buried* by the Pest," as denied, that is, the usual funeral solemnities, as hurried to an unknown grave, unmourned and unwept even by those who loved them best. What boots their wealth in silver and in "robes"?—this latter being one of the commonest forms of wealth in the East where, to this day, changes of raiment and costly and be-gemmed dresses of state are customary presents. Let them gather them up like "mire"—a familiar Biblical emblem of the abundance in which even things most costly lose their value. They will but enrich the righteous when the avenging Nemesis sweeps away the evil-doer and his offspring (*Verses* 16 and 17). What though their "house" be sumptuous as a palace and strong as a fortress? In the day of vengeance it will prove frail as the silky cocoon woven by the moth, or the booth run up of mats and sticks in which, for the brief weeks of harvest, the watchman of the vineyard protected the harvest from the depredations of thieves, birds, wild beasts, and wandering cattle (*Verse* 18). Kindling and rising as he speaks, Job throws off (in *Verses* 19–23) a series of graphic figures, each of which sets forth the doom that awaits the unrighteous, emphasizing especially the suddenness and the utterness of his overthrow. In *Verse* 19, which is somewhat obscure, he seems to pourtray the sinner who has grown wealthy by wrong as lying down rich at night, without suspecting that it is for the last time, though it is the last; or as opening his eyes in the morning, without suspecting that he shall never open them again, though Death is about to close them for ever. In *Verses* 20 and 21—still to denote the sudden and violent surprise of his end, and so presenting another aspect of that sudden death which Job had once reckoned (Chap. xxi. 13) among the blessings of the prosperous wicked—he introduces the metaphors of the flood, the whirlwind, and the east wind—storms with an east wind being very rare in the East, but so severe and destructive when they do occur as to smite down whole villages and to uproot the largest trees. And, in *Verses* 22 and 23, he pourtrays God and man as turning against the poor wretch with whom all the forces of Nature are at strife—God shooting or raining down upon him a succession of evils from above, which it is

impossible for him to escape; while, below, men "clap their hands" at him—an Eastern token of malignant delight, and "*hiss him out of his place*"—hissing being all the world over a token of hatred and contempt.

The description is so tremendous as almost to quicken our sympathy with the hunted and abandoned fugitive who meets the menacing glare of Death and Ruin at every turn. And perhaps we ought not to be surprised that certain critics—save that it is the very office and function of the critic to detect the more subtle strokes of intention and art—find this description of the lot and doom of the wicked so out of keeping with the earlier descriptions given by Job, that they are disposed to ascribe it to other lips than his. There is, however, not only, as we have seen, no need thus to recast the passage; but, further, we absolutely cannot do it without snapping many subtle links of connection between this and other parts of the Poem, and so impairing its unity and its force. If, for example, we turn to Chapter xxi.—the Chapter to which we have so often referred, since in this Chapter Job most fully delineates the prosperity of the wicked, and seems at the farthest remove from his present mood—we may see that that delineation is most craftily qualified, and that all sympathy with it is openly repudiated. After elaborating a description of their prosperity (Chap. xxi. 7–15) which reads like a pastoral idyll, so subtle-sweet is its music, he himself bids us mark (Verse 16) that after all "*their prosperity is not in their own hand,*" but in the hand of God. He calls our attention to this fact as though to set us thinking of the insecure tenure on which their prosperity is held, if not on the certainty that, God being just, it is doomed to perdition. And then, in the same Verse, as if *he* discerned some horror in the distance which *we* cannot see, he breaks into the formula of aversion and abhorrence: "*Far from me be the counsel of the wicked!*" Is it not as if he forewarned us that there is another and a darker aspect of their lot which he cannot yet delineate, but which renders the mere thought of sharing their prosperity horrible to him, too horrible to be entertained for a moment? And if he now (in Chap. xxvii.) delineates that darker aspect, what ground have we for pro-

nouncing him inconsistent or for taking his words out of his mouth ?

We must also, if we would judge him fairly, consider the end he had in view *then* and *now*. *Then*, he was bent on meeting Zophar's extravagant and reckless dogma (Chap. xx.) that the wicked are *always and instantly* arrested by the due punishment of their sins, and that *none but* the wicked suffer such things as these. He then met this crude and cruel dogma by citing patent and notorious facts which ran right in its teeth, by adducing the long-continued prosperity enjoyed by some of the wickedest of men, and the terrible and crushing adversities which at least some good men are called to endure. But, *now*, his end is different, and he approaches it by a different road. The Friends had wanted him to see himself in their portraiture of the lot and fate of the wicked man. And he meets them, not by denying the truth of their description, but by shewing them that *it was not true of him*. It is not simply that

No more can they distinguish of a man
Than of his outward show ; which, God He knows
Seldom or never jumpeth with the heart.

What Job affirms of them is that they have failed to read and interpret even the "outward show" of his life. And so he takes up the pencil they had dropped, draws the lot and fate of the wicked in still more terrible lines and hues than theirs, and then defies them to trace any resemblance in it to his own lot and fate. His children had *not* been destroyed by sword, famine, and pestilence, but by the immediate hand of God. His wealth had *not* been transferred to the righteous, but carried off by caterans. He had *not* been surprised out of life in a moment as by a flood or a whirlwind, but condemned to a lingering malady, a living death. And, above all, instead of fleeing *from* God, and seeking to escape the evils rained down upon him from Heaven, he had fled *to* God, and was still knocking at his gate, pursuing Him with the inquest of his beseeching looks, besieging Him with his importunate cries for justice and redress, content to risk, and even to endure, all evils, if only he might find God and speak

with Him. And, surely, there is no inconsistency here, but rather a subtle harmony and concert.

The links which connect Chapter xxvii. with Chapter xxviii. are not very obvious: on the contrary, they are so latent and subtle that many have looked for them in vain. But we must remember both that even our Western art does not *obtrude* the logical skeleton round which it weaves its breathing forms, that even with us Poetry is "a choice and condensed form of emotional speech;" and that in all Oriental forms of composition there is what seems to us a strange and studied abruptness. It is the special glory of Oriental art "to *conceal* a thing"—as it is the honour of a student or critic "to search out the matter;" and therefore we need not be surprised to find in an Oriental poem a certain difficulty in tracing the flow and sequence of thought. But the difficulty is not, I think, insuperable, or even very formidable, if only we approach it in the right direction, and bring to it not the narrow contracted vision of the bookworm and the pedant, but the open eyes that desire the truth and are familiar with the ways of men.

1. What is the subject which Job has been discussing with the Friends, and which he still continues to discuss now that they have withdrawn from the debate? It is that mysterious Providence which does not, as men often assume that it ought to do, deal out instant and patent retribution whether to the good or the bad. Of the lot and doom of the wicked Job has just confessed that, in the Debate, he had taken an exaggerated view; that, as a rule and in the end, they do receive the due reward of their deeds, although he had once questioned whether they did. But even so, he now adds, even when this admission is made, the mystery of Providence is not thereby solved. That mystery, indeed, is not solvable by man. Much as he can do, he cannot do this: to comprehend God, or the ways of God, is beyond him. Incapable of an intellectual solution of the problem, he must perforce be content with a moral solution of it; as he cannot master or surprise the secrets of Wisdom, he must make it his wisdom to fear God and to eschew evil.

2. This is one, and a main, link of connection. And we have only to limit and specialize the general affirmation, "*Man* cannot solve the mystery of the Divine ways;" we have only to conceive of Job as saying to the Friends, "*I* have not solved it, nor have *you*," to discover other and similar links. Conscious, perhaps, of some appearances of inconsistency between his former and his present descriptions of "the heritage of the wicked from the Almighty," Job explains, and in some sense justifies, the inconsistency by admitting that, when he has done his best to understand the ways of God with men, he cannot understand them; that, while at times he can trace the action of the law of retribution in the lot and fate of men, at other times, in other instances, he cannot trace it: so that he has no alternative but to trust in the action of that law beyond the points to which he can trace it, to believe that it is best to do good and to eschew evil, though he cannot in all cases prove it to be best.

3. But if *he* has not solved "the insoluble riddle of the world," still less have the Friends solved it. And now that, freed from the excitements of controversy, he can look on the solution they have pressed upon him with larger and calmer eyes, he can also make allowance for their failure even while he rebukes their presumption. They had been grievously in error both in so lightly assuming that *they* could interpret and vindicate the ways of God, and in accusing Job of sins of which he was the last man to be guilty in order to vindicate God's way with him. "But, after all," he seems to say to them, "and wrong as you were in much, you were not wrong in motive. You simply attempted the impossible—simply attempted to explain what no man can explain, to justify what no man can justify. You have been wrong, and I have been wrong; we could not but be wrong so long as we set ourselves to solve the insoluble. Let us humble ourselves, and bow before the unfathomable wisdom of God, and take a law from his mouth."

4. And yet, while Job makes allowance for the Friends, and in some sort condemns himself, he also in some sort defends and vindicates himself. Neither he nor they were

able to penetrate to the secrets of perfect and absolute Wisdom, or to comprehend the dealings of Him with whom alone Wisdom dwelt as in its native home. No man could do that. But man's nearest approach to it, his highest attainable wisdom, was to listen to Him with whom dwelt Wisdom itself, to love and reverence Him, and to prove the sincerity of that loving reverence by eschewing the evil which He condemns, however inviting or flourishing it may look for a time. Tacitly and modestly, but unmistakably and firmly, Job professes that to *this* wisdom he has attained; that he has been true to it: that even when he has seen the wicked in great power and mirth he has still cried, "Far from *me* be the counsel of the wicked;" that even when the Lord Himself seemed turned to be his foe, he had still held fast to "the fear of the Lord;" that even when goodness seemed to be a mark for all the storms of heaven, he had still clung to it and "eschewed evil."

There are other, though minuter, threads of connection which might be traced out between the Chapters, but these surely are sufficient. If we take Job as confessing and asserting that the mystery of the Divine Providence is insoluble by man, that he himself has failed in his endeavours to solve it, that the Friends have still more conspicuously failed, but that none the less he has been true to the highest approximate solution of it which man can reach, we shall have no difficulty in seeing why he passes from describing "the doom of the wicked man from God," to elaborate the conclusion, "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to eschew evil, that is understanding."

This conclusion is set forth with much wealth and pomp. The Poet seems to go out of his way to give us all that he knows of the miner's art, to work up all the details of it into one of the most charming and elaborate pictures in his richly-stored gallery. Nor is he content with this picture of the ancient miner and his art (Verses 1-11); he also works into the Chapter one or two of those simple literary feats in which the simplicity of the antique world delighted, and in which he himself excelled,¹ giving us, in

¹ See EXPOSITION of Chapter xv. Verse 10, with the Foot-note to it.

Verses 15-19, both an inventory of the gems most prized in the East, and an assortment of most of the Hebrew words for "gold." No one of these artistic and literary feats may be actually requisite for conveying the Poet's thought, however they may serve to give weight and beauty to his thought. No doubt he lingers over them because he loves them; just as Homer describes at length the shield of Achilles, or Shakespeare the doublings of "poor Wat,"¹ and the unmatched beauty of Theseus' hounds,² because he delights in the work for its own sake. And yet who can wish that a picture so perfect in itself, and to us so instructive, should have been omitted or even curtailed? Who can deny that the long suspense in which our thought is held, while the description proceeds and before the conclusion is reached, lends weight to the conclusion when it comes, and so converts what looks like an artistic defect into an artistic merit and triumph?

Whence he drew the materials of his picture it is impossible to be sure. Even so early as his day mines were worked both in the Lebanon and in Idumea; but, in all probability, it was from the Egyptian mines in the Sinaitic Peninsula that our Poet—whose familiar acquaintance with the life and customs of Egypt we have often remarked—gathered the knowledge here employed; for these mines—with their shafts, working apparatus, and smelting-places—are to be seen to this day in the very condition in which they were left by the Egyptian workmen four or five thousand years ago; the very marks of their tools being so fresh and sharp in that pure dry atmosphere, that more than one traveller has felt, while looking at them, as though the miners had but knocked off work for a spell, and might come back to it at any moment.

The description extends from Verse 1 to Verse 11, and opens by simply announcing (*Verses* 1, 2) that men are capable of taking, and do take, silver and gold, iron and copper, from the earth. The statement is quite, and remarkably, accurate so far as it goes. Silver is, as a rule, found in a vein, an

¹ "Venus and Adonis," 680-708.

² "A Midsummer-Night's Dream," Act iv. Scene 1.

“issue,” a mine; men have to dig for it: while the “place for gold” is on or near the surface of the earth; it is found imbedded in rocks carried down by ancient torrents, and needs to be *washed out* from the pulverized rock. The Hebrew language has a technical term for each of the processes of refining known to the ancients—washing and smelting: it is the former which is used of gold in Verse 1, and the latter which is used of copper in Verse 2. Diodorus (iii. 11 *et seq.*) gives a long description of the method of refining gold in use among the Egyptians. He tells us how, when the gold-bearing rock was crushed, they spread it on “a broad table slightly inclined,” and poured water over it to wash away the earthy parts, repeating the operation several times, till only the finer particles of earth and dross were left, and then removing these by pressing a sponge lightly upon them, till nothing but gold remained on the slab. Thus, even then, men strained, or filtered, or “washed out,” the gold from the dust and rubbish of the broken matrix.

Verse 3 shews that it is from the bowels of the earth that iron and copper were taken. For here the miner is represented as making an end of darkness by carrying light into the dark interior of the earth, and searching, with candle and torch and lamp, for the precious ores buried in its cold and gloomy recesses. An unfortunate ambiguity in our Authorized Version has long led the unlearned to take the “he” of this and the following Verses as referring to a Divine nominative, and to assume that it is *God* who makes an end of darkness, puts forth his hand against the rocks, overturns the mountains from their base, binds the floods, and brings that which is hidden to the light. The mistake was a natural one. But no scholar has ever doubted that the “he” of Verse 3 is *the man*, *i.e.*, the miner, implied in Verses 1 and 2, the man who finds the vein of silver, and washes out the gold, and takes iron from the earth, and smelts copper from the rock. For “*he maketh an end of darkness*,” it is better, therefore, since it prevents so grave a misapprehension to read, “*The miner maketh an end of darkness*.”

In *Verse 4* we are told both how he gets into the dark interior of the earth, and how he carries himself when there.

The *loneliness* of the miner's life, the dark and immense solitude which he invades, his remoteness from the common ways of men, seem to have deeply impressed the Poet's mind. It is "far from the habitations of men" that he sinks his shaft—amid the untrodden precipices of Sinai, for instance; even if he mine his way under a public road or within easy reach of the haunts of men, he is "forgotten of the foot," *i.e.*, those who walk over the very ground beneath which he toils are unaware of him: he "swings" down to his work, or perhaps sits swinging at his work, on a cross-bar slung between ropes, afar from the kindly homes of men and their kindly succour. There is the true poet's touch in this Verse: in a few deft strokes he brings out *the pathos* of the miner's life and occupation—its peril, its loneliness, its remoteness even from those who stand nearest to it.

And there is another fine touch in *Verse 5*. The Poet, though he is carefully elaborating his picture, is not engrossed by it; his mind is large enough and enough at leisure to entertain any impressive generalization which his theme may suggest, even though it should seem remote from his immediate theme. And so, while he is telling us how the miner, blasting his way through the rocks,¹ stirs up the underpart of the earth as by fire, he remembers how much else, how much that is better and more precious, we owe the earth than iron and copper; he reminds us that the earth, which yields us valuable ores, also yields us the "bread" which is still more valuable and necessary to us; and thus he enhances the effect of his delineation of the swarthy solitary miner, carrying fire and havoc through the dark interior of the solid earth, by calling up a vision of the smiling harvests steeped in sunlight, which wave and rustle upon the surface of the earth. Man is master of the world, without and within. Not content with compelling the soil around his habitation to serve him, to find him bread, he penetrates beneath the familiar surface of the earth to its dark hidden recesses, wringing from them their boarded treasures, or wanders afar to

¹ That blasting was known and practised by the ancients, and that it was accompanied by many graphic incidents and effects such as we may see in our own quarries and mines, is certain from Pliny's (*H. N.* xxxiii. 4, 21) picturesque description.

discover the solitary haunts of gem and ore, snatching the sapphire from its bed among the rocks, and washing out the gold-dust from channels deserted by their ancient streams (*Verse 6*).

Verses 7-10. Keen and wonderful as are the instincts of bird and beast, no hawk nor eagle is so quick to detect its prey as man to detect the gold or gems for which he searches; strong as are the lion and the tiger, no proudly-pacing beast rends its prey with the strength and force of man. *He* takes a path inaccessible, and even imperceptible, to them in his quest for every precious thing. With a might unknown to them, he "*puts forth his hand* against the quartz" in which gold is embedded—the phrase denoting the force and vigour of his assault—and blasts the very roots of the mountains bare. As he cuts "channels," or "canals," to carry off the water and drain the mine (*Verse 10*), so also (*Verse 11*) he binds up the waters that leak or trickle through the roof or walls of the galleries he has run through the earth, "so that they *weep* not." This picturesque phrase may have been a technical term among miners in ancient times, just as our colliers name the action of the water that percolates through and into their workings *weeping*, and our navvies call the fine sand which percolates through the sides of a tunnel "*crying sand*."¹ The image is, indeed, so natural and obvious, that it may well have occurred to the "swart toilers" of the antique world.

From *Verse 12* we gather the motive of this elaborate description. The intelligence of man may, and does, surpass the instinctive sagacity of bird and beast. He may, and does, search out every hidden and precious thing. Nothing can escape him, whether on the earth or in the earth, however distant it may be or whatever the darkness and the danger through which he must pass to reach it. But the haunt of

¹ For these technicalities I am indebted to the Rev. J. S. Simon, of Doncaster, who writes: "Perhaps it may interest you to know that this percolation of water into the workings of a mine is still called 'weeping' by our colliers in this neighbourhood, as I have ascertained from the manager of the Wombwell Main; and that a railway contractor informs me that one of the chief difficulties they have to contend against in making a tunnel arises from the percolating of a fine sand through the sides which gradually fills up the working: its technical name is 'crying sand.'"

Wisdom, the place of Understanding, is inaccessible even to his keen and sustained energy, undiscoverable even by his lofty and trained intelligence. Marvellous as his powers are, and marvellous as are his achievements, he cannot, by searching, find out *Wisdom*, i.e., the true nature and causes of things; nor even acquire *Understanding*, i.e., the power which discriminates, appreciates, and applies the large general principles of Wisdom to the demands and exigencies of the moment. To know the world as it is, to master the secret and ruling principles of the Divine Government and Providence, and to draw his thought and life into conformity with them—this is impossible to unaided man, great as he is, and though he be master and king of the world.

It is to lend weight to this weighty conclusion that the Poet has dwelt on what seemed to him among the most wonderful enterprises and achievements of man, on what was most penetrating, astonishing, successful in the various inquiries of men, holding our minds in long suspense, that the sudden stroke which ends our suspense may impress us the more forcibly. It is as though he would say to us, "Much as man can do, and far as he can go in 'making an end of darkness,' there is one thing he cannot do, one darkness of which he cannot make an end. Although

In nature's infinite book of secrecy
A little he can read,

and even more than a little, Wisdom is beyond him, and Understanding. He cannot find them, nor dispel the darkness which veils them from his eyes; he cannot grasp the absolute; he can neither master the hidden principles of human life and duty, nor apply them to the various lots and conditions of men."

This thesis he proceeds to develop in some of his noblest yet simplest Verses. As Wisdom is everywhere at work obviously it can be limited to no single "place," can have no single and specific haunt. As it is the chief good, we have nothing, or nothing adequate, that we can give in exchange for it. If a man were to search for it wherever life is found, traversing the habitable globe, sailing over the sea, plunging into the "abyss" of the ocean till he touched the subterranean

springs which feed the ocean, in none of these would he find the place where Wisdom holds her seat. So far we are carried by the plain affirmation of *Verse 13*, and the fine impersonation of *Verse 14*. And in *Verses 15-19* it is still further argued that, as "if a man would give all the substance of his house for Love, it would be utterly contemned," so Wisdom is in its very nature unpurchasable, that it cannot be bought for all the treasures discovered by the miner or transported by the merchant from Cush and "farthest Ind;" not for gems and jewels, though these are a passion in the East, nor for gold, however choice or choicely wrought. Detailed exposition of these Verses is impossible, for we are no longer able, as even the experts confess, to identify the precious stones catalogued by the Poet with any certainty. But we may remark that, as in Chapter iv. Verses 10 and 11, he gives us all the Hebrew words for "lion," so in these Verses he gives us four out of the seven Hebrew words for "gold," the original substantives having delicate distinctions of sense, which in translating we are obliged to indicate by adding such inadequate adjectives to gold as "fine," "pure," "bright."

We may also remark that by the stress and iteration here laid on wealth as the most mentionable equivalent for "Wisdom," we can hardly fail to be reminded that most men, most rich men at least, do assume a certain connection between wisdom and wealth. The rich man commonly supposes that he derives from his opulence some claim to advise, or control, or "represent" his neighbours; and too often the poor man, being himself greedy of wealth, trusts and admires, if he does not also envy, the man who has achieved it. Both the man of wealth, indeed, and the man of science, are somewhat too apt to arrogate wisdom to themselves, to speak as if their trained or practical sagacity gave them a right to speak with authority on themes which lie beyond their several spheres of thought and action. Job refuses to admit the claim of either. In the first section of this Chapter (Verses 1-12) he argues that a man may have all the faculties for mastering and interpreting the secrets of Nature, and yet be wholly destitute of the true Wisdom, destitute even of the faculty and methods by which alone it can be reached. And in the second section

(Verses 13-21) he argues that, though a man should amass all that men hold most precious, and should be willing to barter all his "gold" for Wisdom, yet Wisdom is not to be had on these terms. If it is not to be found by searching, still less is it to be bought for money.

And yet, by the very emphasis he lays on the fact that Wisdom is not to be "gotten" either by way of discovery or by way of purchase, he inspires us with the hope that there is a way by which even this divine treasure may be attained; that he does not intend to leave us without any answer to the question raised in *Verse 12*, and repeated in *Verses 20 and 21*. If not by the quest of the inquisitive intellect, nor yet by the gold of arrogant wealth, may not Wisdom come to man by the gift and revelation of God? Yes, replies the Poet; it may come *thus*, but *only* thus. Hidden from the eyes of all living, however keen and piercing they may be; hidden even from "the fowl of heaven," to whom the Eastern mind ascribed a supreme gift of divination, so that what is hidden from them is hidden indeed (*Verse 21*); so deeply hidden that *Death*, which unlocks so many secrets, and *Abaddon*, the unfathomed under-world into which men sink at death, and in which so much becomes plain to them, can only repeat the dubious "rumour" of it which they have heard; so deeply hidden that it is to be found neither in the seen nor the unseen world, there is One who knows it altogether (*Verses 22 and 23*); and He, whose gaze embraces all that is, and all that is done on earth and under heaven—He alone can teach men Wisdom. He *has* taught it, so far as they are capable of receiving it. It was by wisdom that He made the world, determining the force of the wind, and the bounds of the sea, and the law of the rain, and even of the lawless-seeming tempest (*Verses 24-26*, with which compare Proverbs viii. 22-30). *Then*, when He created the heavens and the earth, Wisdom, which had dwelt with God, and had been his delight before it became creatively active, which had been "possessed by him from the times before the earth was," became, as it were, objective, so that, He "beheld" it; and not only beheld, but "declared" it, by embodying it in all the works of his hands; and not only declared, but "tested" it, by setting its

demiurgic powers in motion, and marking what they could do (*Verse 27*). But if *men* have succeeded in gathering up and interpreting the wisdom embodied and declared in this natural revelation, *man* has not; the race, as a whole, has failed to derive from it an ethical law and training, a support and consolation under the changes and sorrows and wrongs of time. God must be his own interpreter, if his wisdom is to be made plain to man; for there is much in Nature, much in Providence, much that is most vital and essential, which man cannot explain and justify, or even understand. God *has* been his own interpreter. To man He has said, and said from “the beginning,”

Lo, the fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom,
And to eschew evil, that is Understanding.

“Not in keen insight, or wide experience, or in the learning of the schools,” humane or scientific, is man’s true wisdom to be found, but in reverence and awe. “The fear of the finite in the presence of the Infinite, of the sinful in the presence of the Holy,” the trust of the ignorant and feeble in the All-wise and the Almighty, *this* is the temper to which the true Wisdom comes.¹ Absolute Wisdom—to know things as they are in themselves and in their originating and final causes—is beyond the reach of man as yet; but a reverent trust in God as always good, and as ordering all things for our good, this is man’s highest wisdom for the present, the relative wisdom by which he connects and associates himself with the absolute wisdom of the Almighty Ruler of men. And if this “fear of the Lord”—which is only another name for reverent love, the love kindled by Perfect Goodness, tempered by the awe due to the infinite Inhabitant of Eternity—if this be our Wisdom; our Understanding—since Understanding is that faculty which applies Wisdom to conduct and duty—is to eschew evil, to avoid and renounce all that God in our conscience, or by the common sense of the human race, or by some clearer revelation of his will, has condemned as wrong, injurious, base.

So that to reverence God, to fear and trust Him even

¹ See Professor Plumptre on Proverbs viii. in “The Speaker’s Commentary,” vol. iv.

when we can neither interpret nor vindicate his ways, is Wisdom; and this Wisdom shews itself practically in our hatred and recoil from evil. This, I apprehend, is what Solomon meant when, condensing and abbreviating even Job's brief and weighty conclusion, he affirmed, "*The fear of the Lord is to hate evil*" (Prov. viii. 13). And in Solomon's form, if not in Job's, this conclusion, somewhat variously expressed, would be accepted, I suppose, even by the most sceptical of men. For they admit, with Job, that man, infinite as he is in faculty, and capable of searching into the profoundest mysteries of Nature, is incapable of discovering what lies behind them—the Eternal Substance, or Force, or Will, of which all phenomena are but a various and passing show. But they scruple, and scruple on the very ground of this incapacity, to admit that all these phenomena declare *God*, or that to fear God is the sum and crown of human wisdom. Happily, however, they would be as forward as Solomon himself to avow that the moral outcome of all Wisdom, its practical bearing on human conduct, if at least it may be stated on its negative side, is that we eschew evil. To them, as to us, the final dictate of wisdom is, Hate that which is evil, and its positive correlate, Follow after that which is good. And as we have Scripture for it that to hate evil is to fear the Lord, we may claim even those who as yet can see nothing beyond phenomena and the forces which produce them as among those who fear God, although they fear Him unconsciously or question his very existence: we may even affirm that, practically, they too concur in the conclusion with which Job brings his First Monologue to an end.

I cannot but be aware that, according to this interpretation of it, the Chapter must seem, to many minds, strangely modern and philosophical in its tone. It is impossible to vindicate the interpretation, however, without entering into a study of the treatment of "Wisdom" throughout the whole *Chokmah* literature of the Old Testament, which would be too serious a digression for this brief Commentary.¹ Meantime, before any reader of these pages condemns the inter-

¹ I give only one example of the modern form and tone of thought to be found in the treatment of "Wisdom" in these ancient Scriptures. The writer

pretation as too modern, let him at least remember that, on moral and philosophical themes, the profoundest thoughts, and even the final conclusions of the wise of all ages, and—so far as my reading extends—of all races, do resemble each other in the strangest way, and by virtue of the constitution and limits of the human mind *must* resemble each other: their quest is the same, and their conclusion the same, however various its form.

SECOND MONOLOGUE.

CHAPTERS XXIX.—XXXI.

From a purely literary point of view the Second Monologue is even more beautiful than the First. It has, indeed, no passage of such sustained grandeur, none so rich in instruction or so profoundly suggestive, as the disquisition on Wisdom and Understanding in Chapter xxviii.; but for grace and pathos, in charm of picturesque narrative, and pensive, tender, yet self-controlled emotion richly and variously expressed, it may be doubted whether Chapters xxix. and xxxi. have ever been surpassed, while even their singular power is enhanced by the contrasts supplied in Chapter xxx. He must be dull and hard indeed who can read these Chapters without being touched to the very heart.

Even the style of the Poet changes and softens; it flows more clearly and composedly than in the First Monologue, though with equal volume and force. "The tender grace of a day that is dead" is in it, and the pathetic regret of the man who mourns his departed day. Its tone is plaintive and elegiac. In form and in substance, indeed, it *is* Job's elegy.

of the so-called Wisdom of Solomon (Chap. vii. 26, 27) has this fine passage:—

She is the brightness of the everlasting Light,
The unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness:
And, being but one, she can do all things;
And, remaining in herself, she maketh all things new;
And, in all ages, entering into holy souls,
She maketh them friends of God and prophets,

"As good as dead already," he sings an elegy over himself, over his broken fortunes and wasted life. He has "become like dust and ashes" (Chap. xxx. 19), the song and by-word of men whom all men disdained (Chap. xxx. 1-9); *he* who was once honoured by those whom all men held in honour! As he recalls feature after feature of his "golden days," so rich in various forms of good, its manifold dignities and enjoyments take a new value in his eyes. He feels how rare and precious were the felicitous conditions which he once regarded as the common and inevitable trappings of a man of his character and station.

For it so falls out
That what we have we prize not to the worth
Whiles we enjoy it; but being lack'd and lost,
Why, then, we rack the value; then we find
The value that possession would not shew us
Whiles it was ours.

As we study his description of himself, too, we come to understand the man and his conditions better, to form a larger and a clearer conception of him than we could possibly gather from the concise phrases of the Prologue; and to resent more keenly, as well as to comprehend why he so keenly resented, the gross and unfounded charges of the Friends. Not only are the contents of the phrase, "A perfect man, and an upright, one that feareth God and escheweth evil," so expanded that we see how much they imply, but the very man himself is brought before us, in his habit, as he lived. We learn that he was the sheikh, not of a nomadic, but of a settled and civilized, clan; that, while he dwelt among his own people, on his own estate, this estate lay in the vicinity of a large well-ordered city, with its several ranks, orders, degrees, in which the public laws were administered with discrimination and equity, and from which, or from the site of which, the clan of Job had driven out the rude and savage aborigines who once possessed the land. We learn that in this well-ordered community Job—a great "lord" on his own estate, and a princely merchant sending out wealthy caravans to distant cities—was the man and statesman in highest repute, the judge most esteemed for an incorruptible integrity and for wise practical benevolence, the observed of all observers, held

in reverence by men of every degree, but above all by the poor and needy, who rewarded him for his just and kindly dealings,

Not with fond shekels of the tested gold,
Or stones whose rates are either rich or poor
As fancy values them, but with true prayers,

and the heartfelt blessings of those who were ready to perish. As we read his fond and lingering description of his happy and honourable estate “in months of old,” we feel both that Job might well

make moan to be abridged
From such a noble rate,

and that “the very stream of his life, and the business he had helmed, must, upon a warranted need, give him a better proclamation” than that we have heard from the Friends; we feel too that we can say of him, as Brutus of Antony:

His life was gentle, and the elements
So mixed in him that Nature might stand up,
And say to all the world, *This was a man.*

CHAPTERS XXIX.—XXXI.

CHAPTER XXIX. 1.—*Again Job took up his strain and said :*

2. *O that I were as in months of old,*
 As in the days when God kept me,
3. *When his lamp shone over my head,*
 And by his light I walked through darkness ;
4. *As I was in my Autumn days,*
 When the favour of God was upon my tent,
5. *When the Almighty was yet with me,*
 And my children round about me ;
6. *When my steps were bathed in milk,*
 And the rock poured out for me rivers of oil ;
7. *When I went through the city to the gate,*
 And set up my seat in its spacious arch,
8. *Then the youths saw me and hid themselves,*
 The old men rose and remained on their feet ;
9. *Princes hushed themselves to silence*
 And laid their hand on their mouth :
10. *The voice of the nobles died away,*
 And their tongue clove to the roof of their mouth :

11. *When the ear heard me then it blessed me,
And the eye that saw me bare me witness,*
12. *Because I delivered the distressed who cried out,
And the fatherless, and him that had no helper ;*
13. *The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me,
And I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy ;*
14. *I put on righteousness and it clothed me,
My integrity was my robe and my turban :*
15. *I was eyes to the blind,
And feet was I to the lame ;*
16. *To the poor I was a father,
And I searched into the cause of the stranger ;*
17. *I brake the jaw of the wicked,
And plucked the prey from his teeth :*
18. *And I said, " I shall die in my nest,
And shall lengthen out my days like the phoenix ;*
19. *My root is open to the waters,
And the dew lieth all night on my branches ;*
20. *My glory is fresh upon me,
And my bow reneweth its spring in my hand."*
21. *Men gave ear to me, and waited for me,
They silently awaited my counsel ;*
22. *After my words they added no more,
And my speech distilled on them like dew ;*
23. *They waited for me as for the rain,
And opened their mouth as for the harvest showers :*
24. *If I smiled on them, they could not believe it,
Yet did they not suffer the light of my countenance to fall :*
25. *I chose their ways, and sat as chief ;
I sat like a king among a host,
Like one who comforteth the mourners.*

CHAPTER XXX. 1.—*But now they that are younger than I mock me,
Whose sires I disdained to rank with the dogs of my flock !*

2. *What to me was the strength of their hands ?
Men who brought nothing to perfection !*
3. *Lean through want and famine,
They gnaw the desert,
The land of darkness, waste and desolate,
Plucking up salt-wort in the thicket
And the roots of the broom for their bread :*
5. *They are driven forth from among men—
Men cry after them as after a thief—
To dwell in the gloomy gorges,*
- 6.

7. *In caves of the earth and rocks ;*
 They bray among the thickets,
And huddle together among the bushes :
 8. *Baseborn and base,*
 They are scourged out of the land.
 9. *But now have I become their song,*
 I am a by-word to them ;
 10. *They loathe me :*
 They stand aloof from me,
 And spare not to spit in my face !
 11. *Because He hath let loose the rein and humbled me,*
 They also cast off the bridle before me ;
 12. *A rabble of them riseth on my right to trip up my feet :*
 They cast up their causeways against me ;
 13. *They tear up my path,*
 They help on my hurt,—
 They who themselves are helpless !
 14. *They come on as through a wide breach,*
 They sweep up through the ruins :
 15. *Terrors are turned upon me ;*
 They chase mine honour like a storm-blast,
 So that my welfare passeth like a cloud.

 16. *And now my soul poureth itself out within me,*
 For days of misery take hold upon me !
 17. *The Night pierceth and rendeth my bones within me,*
 And my torment knoweth no pause ;
 18. *By its great force it is changed into a garment,*
 It girdeth me like the collar of my tunic.
 19. *He hath cast me into the mire,*
 And I have become like dust and ashes.
 20. *I cry to Thee, and Thou answerest me not ;*
 I stand up, and Thou eyest me :
 21. *Thou art changed and become very cruel to me,*
 And dost press me hard with thy strong hand !
 22. *Thou hast caught me up and made me to ride on the blast*
 And causest me to vanish in the crash of the storm ;
 23. *For I know that Thou wilt bring me to death,*
 To the house of assembly for all living.
 24. *Prayer is vain when He stretcheth forth his hand,*
 When men cry out at his calamity.
 25. *Have not I wept with him whose day was hard ?*
 Hath not my soul been grieved for the needy ?
 26. *Yet when I waited for good there came evil,*

27. *And darkness when I looked for light !*
 My breast boils and is unquiet ;
 Days of anguish have overtaken me.
 28. *Dark, but not from the heat of the sun, I pass along,*
 I stand up, I cry aloud in the assembly :
 29. *I have become a brother to jackals,*
 And a companion to the ostrich brood :
 30. *My skin blackeneth and peebleth off,*
 And my bones burn with heat.
 31. *My harp is changed to mourning,*
 And my pipe to notes of grief.

CHAPTER XXXI. 1.—*I made a covenant with mine eyes :*

- How, then, could I look upon a maiden ?*
 2. *What then would have been my portion from God above,*
 And what my inheritance from the Almighty on high !
 3. *Doth not calamity overtake the wicked,*
 And misfortune them that do evil ?
 4. *Doth not He behold all my ways,*
 And count up all my steps ?
 5. *If I have walked with fals hood,*
 Or my foot hath hast'd after deceit,—
 6. *Let Him weigh me in an even balance*
 And God will know my integrity ;—
 7. *If my step hath turned out of the path,*
 And mine heart hath gone after mine eyes,
 And any stain hath stuck to my palms,
 8. *Then let me sow and another eat,*
 And let my harvest be rooted up.

 9. *If my heart hath been ensnared by a woman,*
 And I have lain in wait at my neighbour's door,
 10. *Then let my wife grind for another,*
 And let others enjoy her embraces :
 11. *For this is a great infamy.*
 Yea, it is a crime for the judges ;
 12. *It is a fire which eateth down to Abaddon,*
 And would have rooted up all my increase.

 13. *If I had despised the cause of my manservant,*
 Or of my handmaiden, when they strove with me,
 14. *What then could I have done when God arose,*
 And when He visited, what answer could I have made Him ?
 15. *Did not He that made me in the belly make him ?*

Did not One fashion us both in the womb ?

16. *If I have withheld the poor from their desire,
And caused the eyes of the widow to pine ;*
17. *If I have eaten my morsel alone,
That the fatherless should not partake thereof :*
18. *(But from my youth hath he grown up with me as with a father,
And her have I guided from my mother's womb :*
19. *If I have seen any perish for lack of clothing,
Or the needy destitute of covering,
20. And his loins have not blessed me
When warmed by the fleece of my flock :*
21. *If I have shaken my fist at the orphan
When I knew the judges would favour my suit,—*
22. *May my shoulder fall from its socket,
And mine arm be broken at the joint !*
23. *For calamity from God was my dread,
And I could not do it because of his Majesty.*

24. *If I have made gold my hope,
And said to the fine gold, " O thou my trust ! "*
25. *If I have exulted that my wealth was great
And that my hand had gotten much ;*
26. *If when I beheld the sun as he shone,
And the moon as she walked in splendour,
27. My heart was secretly beguiled,
And my hand kissed my mouth :*
28. *(This, too, were an offence for the judge,
For I should have denied God above :)*
29. *If I have rejoiced in the adversity of him that hated me,
Or exulted when evil found him out :*
30. *(Nay, I did not suffer my mouth to sin
By invoking a curse on his life :)*
31. *If the men of my tent have not exclaimed,
" Who is there that is not sated with his viands ? "*
32. *(The stranger did not lodge in the street,
I opened my door to the wayfarer :)*
33. *If, after the manner of men, I have covered my sin,
Hiding my wickedness in my bosom,
34. Because I feared a great assemblage,
And the scorn of the tribes affrighted me,
So that I kept silence, and left not my tent. . . .*

35. *O that I had One who would hear me !—*

- Here is my signature !—that the Almighty would answer me !
That my Adversary would write out his indictment !*
36. *Would I not carry it on my shoulder,
And bind it about me like a chaplet ?*
37. *I would tell Him the very number of my steps,
I would draw near Him like a prince !*
38. *If my land hath cried out against me,
Or any of its furrows have wept ;*
39. *If I have eaten its fruit without payment,
Or have caused its owners to sigh out their life :*
40. *Let the thistle spring up instead of wheat,
And instead of barley noisome weeds !*
- The pleas of Job are ended.*

Of all his losses, that which touches him most deeply, which therefore he puts in the forefront of his complaint, is the loss of that habitual and intimate communion with God which had been his chief good. This loss he laments again and again in the opening Verses of his Elegy (*Chapter xxix. Verses 2-5*). "O that I were as in months of old !" he cries—in months of *yore*, that is, as the Hebrew indicates, months which lie far back in the distant past ; so far are they removed from him now that he looks back on them through a blinding mist of grief, now that his eyes are dimmed by that crowning sorrow, "remembering happier things." The happiest he remembers, the sum and origin of all his happiness, is that God was with him, that God's lamp shone over his head, shedding a light on the darkest windings of his path, so that he neither fell nor strayed.

In thinking of the days that are no more,

too, the days that he most fondly recalls are not—and this lends a new touch of pathos to his lament—the days of care-less and all-enjoying youth, but the more sober, settled, and steadfastly happy days of his ripe manhood ; not the *Spring* days, when he was sowing his seed, but the golden *Autumn* days (*Verse 4*), when he was beginning to reap the fruit of all the works his hand had wrought, and to get "the profit of all his labour under the sun." Then, most of all, in the fruitful and honourable maturity of his life, he felt that his

tent stood full in the sun of the Divine favour, and that he was admitted to that sacred fellowship with the Giver of all good which is both life and better than life.

In studying the details of the pathetic description, which commences with *Verse 6*, we must bear in mind, on the one hand, that Job lingers on the details of these happy Autumn days mainly because he finds in them tokens and proofs of the goodwill with which God then regarded him; and that, on the other hand, in this description of his past felicity there is a constant sub-reference to his present distress. He never forgets the tempest, the catastrophe, which hurried him at a stroke from the wealth of an early Autumn into the cold and poverty of a sudden Winter. Even when he does not draw out the contrast, he has it in his thoughts, and is for ever saying to himself—

Then was I as a tree
Whose boughs did bend with fruit; but in one night
A storm
Shook down my mellow hangings, nay, my leaves,
And left me bare to weather.

Remembering this, the Verses will go far toward interpreting themselves, so little is there in them to give us pause.

The images of *Verse 6*—milk, or cream, flowing in streams wherever he went, and the rock yielding him oil in lieu of water—are of course common Biblical metaphors (Comp. Deut. xxxii. 13) for the lavish abundance of his Autumn days, when all nature was at peace with him, and loaded him with its richest gifts.

Verses 7–17 place him before us as a statesman and judge, as chief ruler and magistrate of his clan. When, as Boaz went up to Bethlehem, he left his estate and entered the adjacent city, he was received with the profoundest respect, all classes of the citizens vying with each other to do him honour. As he took his seat in the *broadway*, the spacious chambered recess in the Gate—answering to the Greek *agora* and the Roman *forum*—where public law was administered and public business despatched (*Verse 7*), the young men drew back and “hid themselves” in reverence, as unworthy even to salute a man so great: even the elders

of the city rose as they saluted him, and "remained on their feet" till, *primus inter pares*, he sat down among them (*Verse* 8). The very princes "sat still with awful eye," as if they knew their "sovrán lord was by;" while the nobles hushed the loud voices of authority or strife, and sat waiting in attentive silence for his words (*Verses* 9, 10). But while nobles and princes were hushed, the poor and the distressed, all who had suffered wrong or feared oppression, broke forth in his praise, for they knew his tried and unstained integrity, his resolute and considerate benevolence (*Verses* 11-13). Justice, always a rare virtue with Eastern magistrates and potentates, was his delight, and made him the delight of the wronged and defenceless, nay, of the whole clan; insomuch that every ear that heard him blessed him, and every eye that saw him bore witness to him, while those who had been ready to perish revived at his approach, and the widow's heart sang for joy. The world has long felt and confessed the charm of this wonderful passage. And *it must be felt*: to expend words on it would be but to mar or weaken it.

That this rare virtue *was* the secret of the favour and reverence in which he was held, he himself tells us in the fine phrase of *Verse* 14: "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me;" or, "*I put on justice, and it put me on*" (So Gesenius: "*Justitia indui, eaque me induit*")—a phrase the meaning of which seems to be that, when he assumed the robe of justice, the man was lost in the judge, no private, and much less any corrupt, motive being suffered to influence his decisions. Voluntarily clothing himself with justice as with a garment, justice in its turn clung to him, became habitual to him, a second nature against which he could not sin. So far from having been guilty of the charges alleged against him by Eliphaz (Chap. xxii. 5-9); so far from having taken advantage of his brother's need, stripped the naked, withheld water from the faint and bread from the famishing; so far from sending widows away empty, and breaking the arms of the orphan, and favouring the cause of the strong and insolent, he had won the blessing of the widow and the fatherless; he had been eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, and a father to the poor; he had even "*searched*"—

expending much thought and labour and pains—into the cause of the alien, who had no claim save that of a common humanity; and he had smitten down insolent wickedness, and snatched its prey—the poor man's heritage—from its teeth (*Verses 15–17*).

Of a life so unsullied, illustrated and distinguished by a justice and beneficence so rare, it was no marvel that this honoured magistrate, this incorruptible judge, foreboded no evil, assumed that to-morrow would be as to-day, and even more abundant than to-day. Was not God with him, and for him? Was not the fear of the Lord the secret and inspiration of his justice? Why, then, should God desert him? With a conscience void of offence, why should he fear that God would desert him? So far from tormenting himself with any such fear, he had said within himself, "I shall die in the warm spacious nest which God has given me; and even death is far off."

If, however, our translation of it be correct, there is a curious metaphor in *Verse 18*: "I said I shall die in my nest, and multiply my days *like the phoenix*." The Authorized Version reads, "I shall multiply my days *like the sand*." And the Hebrew substantive, strange to say, will admit of either rendering, as in the original manuscripts the difference between the two meanings is indicated simply by a "jot" or dot. In the Babylonian copies the word is so pointed as to signify "phoenix," while in the Palestinian MSS. it is so pointed as to signify "sand." The only arguments, so far as I am aware, in favour of reading "sand" are these: (1) that the computation of the vast total of atoms—or "grains of sand," as the phrase then was—of which the world is composed was a favourite problem with the thinkers of antiquity; and (2) that in the Bible "the sands upon the seashore" is a common emblem of a vast and interminable number. Neither of these reasons carries much weight: the first can hardly, indeed, be called a reason at all; while the second loses its force directly we remember that the Book of Job, though in the Hebrew Scriptures, is hardly of them, but holds a place apart. On the other hand, the common objection to the "phoenix" reading, that the phoenix is a

purely fabulous bird, and that therefore no allusion to it is likely to be made in Holy Scripture, will hardly bear examination. For (1) we shall find that more than one fabulous creature, or, at the lowest, creatures so exaggerated as to become fabulous, are described in the closing Chapters of this very Poem. (2) The legend of the phoenix had a special vogue in Egypt, with which, as we have seen, our Poet had a close and intimate acquaintance; and in Arabia, with which he was connected by blood. (3) The legend found its way into ancient Hebrew tradition, which affirms the phoenix to be the most favoured of all creatures, because, when Eve offered the forbidden fruit to them all, the phoenix alone refused to eat of it; or, again, because, when Noah fed the creatures in the Ark, the phoenix alone sat still and mute, instead of clamouring for its food, that it might give the tasked and busy patriarch as little trouble as possible.¹ (4) Nor does it seem reasonable to conclude that, while our Lord constantly illustrated "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" by parables of fictitious persons and events, no inspired writer could have been suffered to draw an illustration from a fictitious and apocryphal bird. And (5) in the Verse itself there is one very strong reason why we should prefer this rendering: viz., that it falls in with and completes the figure—that it puts a bird into the nest—of the previous line:

I said, "I shall die in my *nest*,
And multiply my days like *the phoenix*."

On these grounds most recent Commentators accept the rendering, and make Job, in his happy forecast of many days and much good, allude to the fabulous bird which, for its courtesy to Noah, received, according to the Hebrew legend, the gift of immortality, and, according to the Egyptian legend, lived for a thousand years, and then, setting fire to its nest, renewed its youth in the funeral pyre.

With *Verse 19* the figure changes, and we see the righteous man like as a tree planted by ever-flowing rivulets, and refreshed by the dew that lies all night on its branches, whose

¹ For the authorities for these traditions see Delitzsch *in loco*.

leaf withers not, whose fruit fails not. It was Job's hope that he might resemble such a tree as this, and that whatsoever he did would continue to prosper.

With *Verse 20* the figure changes again. And now he tells us he had trusted that his "glory," all that made life bright and honourable to him, would abide in undiminished splendour; and that his manly vigour, his power to defend and enjoy his "glory," would remain unimpaired, like the unstrung "bow," which renewed its strength and elasticity in his hand.

With *Verse 21* he passes from the bright hopes bred in him by his happy conditions, and resumes his autobiographical sketch, dwelling once more, in order to prepare us for the contrast of Chapter xxx., on the profound and loyal reverence in which he had been held by men of every degree. With patient and silent deference, he tells us, they waited for his counsel, or his decision, in their debates and disputes; his words being sweet and fruitful to them as morning-dew or summer-showers; his words being as final and decisive as they were welcome, since, when *he* had spoken, they added no after-words to his (*Verses 21–23*). If he smiled on, or toward, any of them, they could hardly be persuaded that the condescension was intended for them; and yet, despite their bashful incredulity, they took good heed to intercept the smile, to catch it up and appropriate it, before it reached the ground (*Verse 24*).

The blending of kindness and authority in the two figures of *Verse 25*—the king and the comforter—is obvious; but to feel the propriety of the phrase, "*I sat . . . like one who comforteth the mourners,*" we must remember that among the Arabs, as among the Jews, the friend who assumed the office of "comforter" occupied a raised seat, while the mourners crouched on the ground around him.

Taken as a whole, the Chapter indicates a simple and primitive organization of the aristocratic type, not unlike that which we find in Homer, but in full accordance with the deference to pure descent and noble birth which has always characterized the Arab race; while it also denotes a social condition much more complex and advanced, and in form

much more civic and municipal, than we commonly associate with the habits of that race, although a tolerably exact parallel to it may still be found in the large and populous cities of Central Arabia.

As we pass to the opening Verses of *Chapter xxx.*, we may well ask :—

What are these,
So wither'd, and so wild in their attire,
That look not like inhabitants o' the earth,
And yet are on't?

They *are* men, but men “whom the vile blows and buffets of the world” had made vile, and “so incensed, that they were reckless what they did to spite the world;” men

So weary with disasters, tugg'd with fortune,
That they would set their life on any chance,
To mend it or be rid on't.

From the earliest times Commentators have agreed that we have in Verses 1–15 a graphic sketch of an abject troglodyte race, driven by superior force to take shelter in dens and caves of the earth. But Ewald was the first to suggest that these troglodytes were *the aborigines* of the Hauran, who had been invaded, conquered, and dispossessed by the superior race among whom Job sat as chief. “The men of whom Job here complains,” says Ewald, “were the aboriginal inhabitants of these regions, who had long before been subjugated by the race to which Job's family belonged, and were reduced at length to such degradation, that those who would not be enslaved fled to the wilds and the natural coverts of the land, where they led a stunted and miserable life; and who, whenever they ventured near in quest of relief, were driven forth from society with abhorrence, as worthless despicable creatures.” The suggestion was so happy, and tallies so exactly with all the details of these Verses, that it is now generally and gratefully adopted.

Dispossessed, despised, and despicable aborigines such as these are to be found in every region of the East. We are having our own troubles with them to-day in the lofty passes and branching valleys of the great mountain-range which,

separates Hindostan from Afghanistan: we find them, indeed, a constant trouble and peril in all the border-districts of India. As a rule, these aboriginal races are of an inferior strain and stature to the races that have conquered them and seized their ancient haunts; they are commonly driven to take refuge in the hills, while their conquerors settle on the well-watered fruitful plains; their language is rude and harsh, and often a differentiated strain, speaking a different tongue, may be found in the adjacent valleys of the same great mountain-range. Aliens in form, aspect, language, customs, complexion, incapable of any settled industry, robbers by necessity as well as by choice, repulsive in appearance, fierce and intractable in temper, they are at once feared, hated, and scorned by the more civilized races who have displaced them.

All these features, common to many tribes, come out in the vagabond and villainous, but most miserable, race—base by birth and base by habit (Verse 8)—depicted by Job in Verses 1-15. But why does he depict them so carefully? Why does he break off from the exquisite and flowing description of his Autumn days in order to depict them? Mainly, no doubt, to enhance the effect of his description by force of contrast; to paint in the dark background against which the figure of the upright judge and beloved philanthropist will stand out more distinctly. The position and public esteem he once, and long, enjoyed will impress us the more deeply if we see him for a moment as he lies on the *mezbele*, and learn how

all indign and base adversities
Make head against his estimation;

how utter and miserable a change has passed upon him.

And surely nothing could feelingly persuade us of that change if the contrast he now dashes in does not. Once, the young men of his own tribe, even though they were nobles or princes of the tribe, had drawn back in reverence, as unworthy of his salute; but now "they that are younger" than he, lost to the immemorial respect for age, make him their derision, even though they be the sons of "sires whom he had disdained to rank with the dogs who watched his flocks" (Verse 1), sons of the miserable outcasts who, for lack

of steadfast purpose and settled industry, could do nothing well (*Verse 2*), nor even be trusted as men trust a dog. If there is a tone of contempt in these Verses, we must not therefore assume that Job had never looked with an eye of pity on the abject and irreclaimable outcasts who now made him their mock: for these, too, were among the perishing and helpless whom he had habitually befriended (Chap. xxix. 12, 13) and delivered. From Chapter xxiv. Verses 4-8, we learn that he had often brooded over their miserable fate; that their misery had been a prominent factor in that standing problem of the Divine Providence which had engaged and engrossed his thoughts; that he had often wondered why, under the rule of a God both just and kind, any race or class of men should have been condemned to conditions so hopeless and degrading; that he had even resented the misery and oppression to which they were exposed. And from *Verse 3* onwards, after this brief touch of contempt provoked by their unprovoked insults, his description of them blends many strokes of pity and compassion with his natural resentment of their insolence and malignity. It is "want" that makes them lean and pithless; it is "famine" that drives them to "gnaw the desert," as if they were brutes rather than men, and to snatch from it a scanty and innutritious sustenance; it is

For fear that day should look their shames upon,
that

They wilfully themselves exile from light,
And must for aye consort with black-brow'd night,

in "the land of darkness, waste and desolate," hiding themselves in the secret places of the earth, in the shadows of the hills, in the caves of the rock, in "rough caves cut out in the precipitous sides of nullahs, or dried-up watercourses."¹ Here, in the hills and on the steppe, they are driven, for lack of better food, to browse on the buds and young leaves of the "sea-purslain," or "salt-wort," a shrub which still grows both in the desert and on the sea-coast, and is still eaten by the

¹ The village of Ragha Migana, among the Afghan hills, is described as consisting of such "caves" in the "Daily News" of the very day (March 11, 1879) on which these sentences were first written.

abject poor of the East; and to devour the bitter but edible root of "the broom," or *genista*, as the Indians of Florida do to this day (*Verses* 3, 4).

The art of our necessities is strange,
That can make vile things precious,

even things so vile as these.

If, moreover, weary of their hard lot, they venture near the cities or estates of civilized men, these miserable pilferers are instantly driven back to the gorges and caves from which they emerged; men shout after them as after thieves, which in very deed they are (*Verses* 5, 6). Their very language is an offence to civilized ears, as the language of most savage races, with its growling gutturals and sharp clicks, commonly is. Herodotus compares that of the troglodyte Ethiopians to the screech of the night-owl, just as Job compares that of the troglodytes of the Hauran to the "bray" of the ass (*Verse* 7). Their customs, of which Job marks one, are no less offensive, no less sure to disgust all cleanly livers; they "huddle together in heaps among the bushes," without distinction of age or sex, seeking a miserable warmth by close contact with each other. With so much to disgust and repel a race like that of Job, singularly cleanly in its habits, singularly proud of the purity of its blood and of the soft picturesque beauty of its language, what wonder that these abject creatures, "baseborn and base," should be scourged out of the land so often as they ventured to set foot within it (*Verse* 8)?

Yet even these miserable wretches, whom he regards with a strange yet natural mixture of compassion and aversion, now turn against Job, and make *him* their by-word, loading him with the most extreme and filthy insults (*Verses* 9, 10)! Because God has let loose his anger against him, they also throw off all restraint, all fear, all decency even (*Verse* 11). This allusion to God as the real author of all his woe and shame is a quiet stroke of art, preparing the way for the second section of this Chapter (*Verses* 16-31), in which Job makes his last appeal against the apparent injustice and cruelty of the Almighty. But, for the present, his mind is mainly occupied with the cruel injustice of man, of those who, though they wore the form of man, he could hardly deem

worthy of the name. His soul is exceeding filled with the contempt, not of the proud—that were a less intolerable fate—but with the contempt of the abject and contemptible. As he broods over their dastardly and unprovoked insolence, his imagination stirs and works, till their insolent enmity presents itself to him under the form of a military siege.

In his time, and for many a long century after, those who attacked a walled city threw up a military “causeway” before it. Commencing at a distance from the walls, and sheltering themselves under cover of their shields and tortoises, they gradually built up a broad slope to the level, or nearly to the level, of the lofty wall. Along this slope, when it was complete, the troops advanced to the assault, clambering over the wall when they reached it, or, if it were still too high, battering it down with their beetles and rams. This is the image elaborated in *Verses 12–15*. The horde or rabble of outcasts, who were themselves helpless, advanced against him, who, like them, had no helper; the sense of their own destitution breeding no ruth in them, but rather inflaming their cupidity and insolence. “They cast up their causeways” against him; they make breach on breach in the wall; they sweep up through the ruins which they themselves have made; and, as he flees in terror from the irresistible attack, they chase him from street to street like a blast. All refuge is closed against him, all hope of escape taken away; so that his “welfare” vanishes like an unsubstantial and passing cloud.

Of course we must not take all this literally. It is but a figure, but it is a figure which shews how deeply Job had been wounded by the insolence of men who but a little while since would not have dared to brook his mere glance.

It is at this point that Job passes from the anguish caused him by the spurns and insults of the aboriginal hordes, to dwell once more on the foul and piercing torment of his loathsome disease. And as many critics find *Verses 16–31* entirely out of place, and pronounce the tone of despair by which they are pervaded utterly inconsistent with the calm and pensive beauty of this exquisite Elegy, and with the convictions and hopes to which he had now attained (*Cf.* Chap. xix. 23–27),

it is necessary that we should briefly consider what force there may be in this suggestion. But little force will be left in it, I submit, when the following considerations have been duly weighed.

1. If the power of this Elegy was to be enhanced by an explicit, as well as an implicit, contrast between Job's former happiness and present misery, it was but natural that, as he brooded over the insults of the "baseborn and base," and the foul torment of his terrible leprosy, he should once more appeal against the hard injustice of his doom.

2. The presence and favour of God, which he so fondly recalls, had been the sum and crown of his felicity in the happy Autumn days which he "prizes to their worth" now that they are gone. How, then, could he fail to bemoan the absence and disfavour of God as the source of all his misery? how fail to feel, and to accentuate, the "change" in Him who, once always with him, would not now so much as answer when he cried to Him, and only eyed him with stern and cruel indifference when he stood up and mutely implored relief (Verses 20, 21)?

3. The very despair of Job reminds us of the real and standing problem of the Book. When he complains that he has no hope but in death, and even longs to die, "that he may look on death no more" (Verse 23), we cannot but remember that this despair of all relief on this side the grave was the very condition of his trial. The charge made against him was that he did not serve God for nought; and how should his pure and disinterested piety be made apparent if all hope that he should be saved were not taken away? On the other hand, the fact that he was persuaded that God had determined "to bring him to death" (Verse 23), and that it was vain to try to turn Him from that purpose (Verse 24), by no means excludes the hope so splendidly and solemnly expressed in Chapter xix.; for that hope was that *by death* he should be saved from death, that even in Hades God would shew him a path of life.

4. And, after all, a careful study of these Verses shews that, on the whole, they are a plaintive lament over a happiness irredeemably and mysteriously lost, rather than a fierce

outburst of passionate resentment such as we have often heard from Job before. It is no wild mutiny against the authority of Heaven, no crude and reckless impeachment of the Divine Rule, which meets us here; but, rather, a pathetic complaint of the cruel change in the attitude of God toward him (the "Thou art *changed*" of Verse 21 is the keynote of the whole passage), a change the more cruel because unaccountable and unprovoked. God had been moved against him, as God Himself confesses, "*without cause*;" and any one who will carefully study the Verses (Verses 20-24) in which the effects of this causeless but fatal change are most strongly expressed, and mark how they are led up to, and softened, and toned down by the Verses which precede and follow them, will feel that, instead of charging God foolishly, Job is bewailing a change of which he can neither give nor hope to give any reasonable account.

This lament over the harsh and inscrutable contrast between the present and the past commences with *Verse 16*, in which he exclaims that, as the days of his misery come back and take hold on him once more, his very soul is poured out within him; *i.e.*, his soul, yielding itself without resistance to the intense pressure of his misery, is, as it were, crushed and dissolved into a mere stream of sorrow. There is no cessation to his pain. It rends him by night as well as by day (*Verse 17*), rends and gnaws his very bones; for the phrase translated, "My *torment* knoweth no pause," means literally, "My *gnawers*"—*i.e.* my gnawing pains—"sleep not." The word is only used here and in Verse 3, and it implies that as the hungry aborigines "gnawed the desert," suffering nothing to escape them, so his cruel pains "gnaw" him. The allusion is, of course, to his foul disease, the *lepra Arabica*, which eats through the flesh, and feeds on the very bones, till the limbs fall off one by one. An Arabian historian, quoted by Wetzstein, says of Job: "God had so visited him that he got *the disease which devours the limbs*, and worms were produced in the wounds, while he lay on a dunghill, and, except his wife, who tended him, no one ventured near him."

Verse 18 is one of the most difficult, though one of the

least important, Verses in the Poem. Most Commentators, however, are content to take it as denoting such changes and symptoms of disease in Job's outward form as distorted his very mantle, and made his tunic cleave round his throat as though it would strangle him. The reading is so tame and prosaic at the best, and so nearly borders on the grotesque, that I venture to suggest that Job draws a bold figure from the foul and cleaving incrustations of his leprosy, and represents his very torment as becoming a kind of garment to him. Those who have suffered extreme and long-continued pain know very well how their torment seems to cover them, to cleave to them, and even to yield them a certain foul and miserable warmth. There are moods of pain, though perhaps few men know them, in which no figure would seem more natural and expressive than this :—

By its great force it is changed into a garment,
And girdeth me like the collar of my tunic.

And (*Verse 19*) it is *God* who has sent this cleaving choking torment upon him, which, casting him on the *mezbele*, has reduced him to “dust and ashes,” *i.e.*, brought him down to death.

Verses 20–24 contain that “outburst of despair” which has been thought inconsistent with the calmer tone of Job's Soliloquy, and with any settled hope of life beyond the grave. But though there is deep pain in the passage, and poignant, or even passionate, regret at the changed and inexplicable posture which God has assumed towards him, I find no wild and reckless “outburst” in it, no bold and insolent impeachment of the Divine Justice; and though there is a settled despair of *life* in it, there is, I think, no such despair of death, or of what death may bring. In *Verse 20* Job simply asserts what was undeniably true—that if he called on God, God did not answer him; that if he “stood up,” in mute and meek appeal, hoping that God would “look with an eye of pity on his losses,” He did but regard him with cold indifference or stern displeasure—as an offended Eastern monarch might look on a disgraced courtier who stood up in the Divan. humbly reminding his lord of his presence, and suing for some

sign of grace ; just, indeed, as Saul, when he found that David was accepted in the sight of all the people, "*eyed* David from that day and forward" (1 Sam. xviii. 9). It is this *change* in God that Job accentuates in *Verse* 21. The Friend in whose favour alone he truly lived was turned to be his Foe, pressing him down with the strong hand and outstretched arm which had once been his defence and support ; and hence he could say—

O that is gone for which I sought to live,
And therefore now I need not fear to die.

Life being gone—for with him life no longer than God's love would stay, since it depended on that love—there was no hope but in death ; and the sooner *that* came the better. It could not but come soon. Caught up by the bitter wind of the Divine displeasure, he must vanish in the crash of the storm (*Verse* 22). The persistent silence of God, his dumb indifference to one on whom He had lavished every mark of grace, shewed that it was his settled purpose to put Job to death, to bring him down to Hades, which—surely not without some latent indication of hope—Job here calls "the house of assembly for all living" (*Verse* 23). Death, says Schiller, is universal, and cannot therefore be an evil ; and surely all light, all hope, cannot be excluded from the house into which *all* the living pass at death. If, however, it be the Divine decree that he is to die, it is vain to appeal against it ; God is not to be moved by the outcries of men from the steadfast purpose of his will : when the word has gone forth out of his mouth, none can turn it back. So, at least, I understand *Verse* 24. But there is an alternative reading which demands consideration. Delitzsch, following Ewald, reads the Verse thus :—

Doth not one, however, stretch forth his hand in falling ?
Doth he not, when being ruined, cry out for help ?

and connects it with the context thus : "I must soon die. May I not, then, lift up my hand in appeal, and cry out for help before I die ? I who have wept for others, may I not weep for myself ?" Taken thus, the Verse yields a perfectly good and congruous sense. It is an appeal to the natural

instincts and habits of men which justify Job in uttering his lament. But the former rendering carries the greater authority with it, I think, and yields a sense equally good and equally congruous with the general strain of thought.

To the merciful, God shews Himself merciful; to the unmerciful, without mercy. The cruel change in Him, then, which is the theme of Job's lament, might be accounted for had Job himself been wanting in sympathy and compassion. But (*Verses 25, 26*) his soul has been habitually "suffused with the tender hues of charity." It was because he had been generous and pitiful, as well as just, that he had cherished the hope of dying in his nest, and of renewing his vigour as the unbent bow renewed its spring in his hand. It was because when, on this competent warrant, he looked for good, evil came upon him, and darkness when he looked, and thought he had a right to look, for light, that his heart boiled within him, and he was overtaken by days of anguish (*Verse 27*). It was not simply the defeat of his hopes, but their unjust defeat, which he resented; it was not simply his misery, but the unreasonableness of his misery—the mystery of it and the inequity of it—which he mourned.

And that misery was so abject, as well as so inscrutable, that he might well cry out against it (*Verse 28*). Dark, not from the heat of the sun,¹ but from the fatal and corroding heat of his leprosy—which burns up his very bones, and blackens his skin till it falls off from him (*Verse 30*)—he is driven to outcries which he knows to be vain (*Verse 29*); outcries which to the bystanders are harsh and dissonant as those of the ostrich and the jackal, than which nothing can well be more harsh and dolorous.²

This lament over the terrible ravages, and still more

¹ For a similar construction see Isa. xxix. 9: "Drunken, but not with wine:" *i.e.*, not with wine, but with the Divine wrath.

² The howl of the jackal is one of the most tormenting discords of an Eastern night; while Dr. Shaw affirms that the ostrich also makes night hideous with the most doleful cries and groans; and Dr. Tristram adds that the cry of the ostrich, which even Hottentots have mistaken for the roar of the lion, sounds more like the hoarse lowing of an ox in pain. One of the Hebrew names for the ostrich means, according to some authorities, "daughter of the loud cry," while another name for it is undoubtedly derived from a verb which means "to emit a tremulous and stridulous sound."

terrible moral effects, of his fatal and loathsome disease, closes with a Verse (*Verse 31*) of idyllic beauty and sweetness, which, so far from being out of place, is obviously and conspicuously appropriate, both as denoting the more softened tone and plaintive mood into which Job has fallen, and as fitly introducing the sweeter and purer strain of pensive recollection contained in the following Chapter. No careful reader of the Hebrew, or even of the English, can fail to notice the melodious close in which this section of Job's Elegy dies away. The Verse has a tender and a "dying fall." The harp and the pipe are instruments of mirth: and by the words,

My harp is changed to mourning,
And my pipe to notes of grief,

Job at once recalls his delights, and affirms that all his delights are now "converted to their opposites." The festive and joyous music of his life has broken into harsh discords; instead of merry tunes, nothing is to be heard but doleful and dissonant cries. In fine, as in the previous Chapter we have seen him in all the happy wealth and abundance of his Autumn prime, so in this Chapter

That time of year we may in him behold
When yellow leaves, or few, or none, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.

And yet, radical and mournful as is the change in the whole tone and tenour of his life, it is utterly unprovoked. It springs solely from the change in God, who has withdrawn his presence from him and become "very cruel," although he has done nothing to

blunt his love,
Or lose the good advantage of his grace,
By seeming cold or careless of his will.

On the contrary, as he proceeds to shew in *Chapter xxxi.*, he has made that Will the one rule both of his inward and of his outward life.

This Chapter is perhaps the most lovely in the whole Poem, and its theme is worthy of the exquisite and flowing strain in

which it is couched. Certain theologians bid us mark, indeed, that it is a purely natural, not a Christian, morality which Job claims to have attained, a morality therefore which could not render him acceptable to God; and certain critics have been shocked at the immodesty with which his claim is advanced, and all the virtues of his life laid bare to view. But if the morality of this Chapter be not that of the Sermon on the Mount, it would be hard to say where that morality is to be found. As he

Unlocks the treasures of his happy state,

Job represents himself as having been chaste, just, benevolent, pious: too magnanimous even to rejoice in the misfortunes of an enemy, much less to wish him evil; so hospitable, that his house stood open to all comers, and there was not a man in the tribe who had not been "sated with his viands;" so sincere, that he had no secret sin to hide, nor had ever failed to confess any sins of nature, defects of will, taints of blood, by which he had been inadvertently betrayed. He has been chaste in look and desire as well as in action; he has been just to his own hurt, not even wronging his neighbour by so much as a wish; he has not only refrained from wrongful gains, but even when enriched by lawful gains he has not put his trust in uncertain riches; he has not only shunned all forms of open idolatry, but he has not even suffered his heart to be secretly beguiled into any momentary compliance with the current superstitions of his age. And all this inward and spiritual morality—this morality of thought, desire, and emotion, as well as of outward and overt act—has been inspired by a spiritual motive, by a perpetual reference, and deference, to the will of Him who reads the thoughts and intents of the heart (See Verses 4, 6, 14, 15, 23, 28). The theologians who dub this a purely natural morality must surely have a far higher conception of "poor human nature" than they are wont to profess, and should at least point out in what respect it falls short of the morality taught by Christ; while, if they infer that it could not possibly render Job acceptable to God, it would seem that, like St. Peter, they need a special revelation from Heaven to convince them that "in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him."

As for the immodesty which certain critics discover in these autobiographical reminiscences, it would be enough, perhaps, to remind them that Job is on his defence; that he had been openly accused of sins of injustice, inhospitality, impiety, greed; and that therefore he was bound to repel them by an appeal to the whole tenour and spirit of his life. But we may go further, and contend that to recognize "facts as they are," even though they be the facts of our own life, is not to o'erstep the modesty of nature. Nothing is more immodest than the sham modesty which hides self-esteem under a cloak of self-depreciation, and seeks to provoke our good word by speaking evil of itself. Even the Almighty, who is also the All-good, when He reviewed his works, saw, and said, that they were "very good." And even if Job had regarded his good works as his own, it would be hard to have blamed him for confessing that they were good. But so far from regarding them as his own, he constantly ascribes all that was good in them to his fear of God, who "beheld all his ways, and counted up all his steps." The true and singular modesty of the man comes out in the fact that he can do that which would or might be immodest in us without thereby ceasing to be modest.

From a literary point of view the Chapter is so rich in felicitous strokes of art, and in charm of expression, that "none but itself can be its parallel." In many previous Chapters we have met with exquisite pictures elaborated with thoughtful care, but here we have a whole gallery of such pictures, which yet are bound together in unity by their common theme. The various aspects assumed by a just man's life under happy and sumptuous conditions are set forth with rare pictorial art, yet so as to reveal in each case the motives by which his several virtues are animated and inspired. It is the very wealth of beauty—and of that kind of beauty which must be *felt*, since it can hardly be analyzed and demonstrated—which makes it the despair of sympathetic Commentators. Shakespeare affirms—

Lean penury within that pen doth dwell
That to its subject lends not some small glory;

but even his pen, which touched nothing that it did not adorn.
might have faltered had he set it to reproduce and enhance

the "glory" of these closing Verses in the Elegy of Job. Of course, nothing will be attempted here but a few brief notes, to indicate the sequence of thought, or to bring out a meaning which might escape the casual reader's cursory eye.

The first Section (Verses 1-8), though not destitute of pictorial power, is less marked by it than the subsequent sections of the Chapter: it is more various in theme, more general in tone, and may fairly be regarded as mainly introductory—as the porch through which we are to enter the picture-gallery. Chastity and justice are perhaps the rarest virtues with all men: in all ages they have been conspicuously rare in the East, rarest of all in the rulers and magnates of the East. On these two virtues, therefore, as those in which men of his blood and station were most commonly deficient, Job places the burden of emphasis, claiming, in general terms, to have exercised them, even in these introductory Verses, expanding and illustrating the claim in Verses 9-23.

He had prescribed a law or entered into a covenant with his very eyes, forbidding them to soil virginal innocence with so much as an impure look (*Verse 1*). At the very outset, therefore, he strikes the key-note of the highest and most spiritual morality—that which rules thought and desire. He had anticipated the penetrating dictate of our Lord: "Whosoever *looketh* on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." And (*Verse 2*) this spiritual and high-toned morality was informed by the true motive. It was no fear of man, no dread of consequences, no respect for public order and well-being, no pure and stately self-respect even, which made and kept him pure; but simply reverence for the will and judgment of God, simply that "fear of the Lord" which he believed to be the highest wisdom of man. "*The eyes,*" says a Talmudic proverb, "*are the procurers of sin:*" and Job believed (*Verse 3*) that had he but given licence to his eyes he would have become "wicked," would have "done evil," and would therefore have been overtaken of misfortune and calamity. For (*Verse 4*) the Divine Omniscience is not to be evaded any more than the Divine Power is to be resisted. He who beholds all

our ways, however hidden and secret, has constituted Himself the Avenger of outraged innocence, the Judge and Chastiser of all who offend against his pure and holy law.

And his life has been as sincerely just as it was chaste. There has been no hypocrisy in it (*Verse 5*), no jar between principle and practice, but a plain yet studied sincerity, a clear and unimpeachable integrity. If (*Verse 6*) God will but weigh him in an even, or equal balance, He will find—as indeed He *had* both found and declared—that Job is, if not a perfect man, at least “an upright.” To God’s judgment, therefore, he once more appeals, sure that He will know his integrity, though he does not so much as dream that God had boasted of his integrity in heaven long before he himself had begun to defend it on earth. If (*Verses 7, 8*) he has suffered his feet to be drawn from the straight path of obedience; if he has looked at his neighbour’s *lands* to lust after them, and any stain of legal chicanery or violent extortion has stuck to his palm, he is content to take the due reward of his deeds, content that strangers should dispossess him of his lands, eating what he had sown, or destroying the harvest for which he had toiled.

In *Verses 9-12* he expands the thought of Verse 1, and makes a picture of it. “A hot temper leaps o’er a cold decree.” And he conceives of himself for a moment—though only to repel the conception with abhorrence—as having had his heart “ensnared,” *befooled*, by a woman, a neighbour’s wife, despite the covenant he had made with his eyes; and as playing the part of an Eastern gallant—lying in wait at his neighbour’s door for some signal or opportunity of secret access. An Arab poet, Muhâdi ibn-Muhâmel, has a curious parallel to Verse 9, which shews that the manners and wiles of that primitive age have survived to more modern days. “*The neighbour’s dog never barked on my account,*” *i.e.*, because I was lurking about on an illicit design; “*and it never howled,*” *i.e.*, because it was beaten for betraying, or lest it should betray, my presence. *This* sin Job disavows with vehemence. Lightly as men have commonly regarded it, to him it was an infamy that would be but justly avenged were he who is guilty of it himself to receive the very measure he had

meted out to others. It was a public crime; it was a pernicious "fire," consuming him who kindled it, and burning down to the level from which it rose.

In Verses 13-23 the other sentiment of the Introduction is expanded, defined, illustrated; and Job depicts himself both in his private (Verses 13-15) and in his public (Verses 16-23) relations as governed by an exact and generous justice.

No servant of his, however absolutely at his mercy or command, had been willingly wronged by him, nor had any supposed wrong of groom or maid been contemptuously duffed aside. Even when they "strove" with him, and he, a judge, had been summoned by them before a bar of justice, he had treated them with respect. Even, so at least the Jewish commentators seem to have taught, when they strove *with his wife*, he openly espoused their cause if their cause were just; for we read in the Talmud: "The wife of Rabbi Jose began a dispute with her maid. Her husband came up and asked her the cause; and when he saw that his wife was in the wrong, he told her so in the presence of the maid. 'Thou sayest I am wrong in my maid's presence!' cried the angry lady. '*I do but as Job did,*' replied the Rabbi." Neither by affection nor by self-interest, and still less by any despotic humour of the blood, would Job suffer himself to be diverted from the plain and beaten road of justice between man and man. And his motive was still the true motive—the fear of the Lord (*Verse 14*). His servants, his slaves even, were of one blood with him. Made by the same Divine hand, cast in the same mould, possessed of the same miraculous organs, senses, passions, with himself, they had the same claim and right to be weighed in an even balance—a right which he had never refused to admit.

In Verses 16-23 he passes from his private to his public relations, from client to magistrate, and affirms that, as a judge and ruler of men, he had observed the most exact and impartial justice, and that he had not forgotten that

earthly power doth then shew likest God's
When mercy seasons justice.

So far from having abused the authority of his rank and

station in order to take advantage of any man, however destitute or helpless he might be, it was precisely those who were most easily, and therefore most commonly, wronged to whom he had shewn the most studied and friendly consideration. This general assertion of his justice and benevolence he clothes in words so picturesque and suggestive that they call up before our minds a whole series of contrasted scenes. We see Job as he appeared in the angry and distorted imagination of the Friends—holding back the poor man from his lawful and proper desire; suffering the widow's eye to languish for lack of comfort and help; eating his daily morsel in miserly and grudging seclusion, lest the hungry should cast on it so much as a longing look; standing by with an eye of indifference while the naked famished with cold; shaking a threatening fist at the orphan who came to plead his suit before the judges, the moment he (Job) knew the judges to be his friends: and, again, we see the man as he was and lived—training the orphan like a father; leading the widow along her perplexed and solitary path as if he were her child; flinging the fleeces of his flock round the loins of the naked, his own heart warming at the warmth of their gratitude, and singing with their song (*Verses 16–21. Comp. Chap. xxix. 13–16*). “If this,” he concludes, “has not been the manner of my life from my youth up, if I *have* abused my pride and power of place, then let an exact retribution be meted out to my guilt. May my arm”—the symbol and instrument of his power—

Struck by the impartial hand of injured Heaven,

“fall from its socket and be broken at the joint” (*Verse 22*). He takes no credit for this imprecation; it involved him in no danger; the sin of injustice to the poor and helpless, common as it was, had been rendered impossible to him by “the fear of the Lord” (*Verse 23*).

In *Verses 24, 25*, while he hints at still another motive for his unstained integrity, he also advances another and a still higher claim on our respect. Men are commonly prompted to extortion and injustice by greed. From that base prompting he has been saved by his indifference to

wealth. Able to delight himself at all times in the Almighty, finding "the chief good and market of his time" in the service and favour of God, he has placed, he could place, no trust in uncertain riches. That "his hand had gotten much" quickened no emotion of pride or exultation in him; for to get much is not much to the man who has got God, and in Him treasures which no money can buy (Chap. xxviii. 15-19).

Gold cannot be his God, nor can he have any God but the Lord. Even from the slightest and most momentary compliance with the prevailing superstition of his age and race he had kept himself free (*Verses 26-28*). Sabæism, or the worship of celestial bodies, was the cult of the ancient Arab tribes. To throw a kiss with the hand toward the rising sun, or toward the moon, as she walked the clouds like a thing of life, was a recognized form of adoration, and seems to have been observed in secret long after the public worship of sun, moon, and stars had been forbidden and abandoned. To Job, such an adoration of the rulers of day and night, much as he admired their splendour and beauty—and that he was profoundly moved by them is evident from the terms in which he describes them (*Verse 26*)—was both a legal offence, "*a crime for the judges*," and a religious offence, "*a denial of God above*." Both the phrases just quoted from *Verse 28* are striking and suggestive. The phrase "*a crime for the judges*" seems to indicate that the powerful clan of which Job was a sheikh had but recently embraced the *din Ibrāhīm*, as the Arabs still call it; that, like Abraham, they had resolved no longer to worship gods that set and change, and had made it a public offence to worship the creature instead of the Creator; but that the change was sufficiently recent to admit of many lapses into the old superstition, since the judges had still occasionally to punish it as a crime: while the phrase "*I should have denied God above*," though it may be meant simply to imply that God was "*above*" the sun and the moon, can hardly fail to recall the Divine Name so frequent on Arab lips—"the *Exalted One*," He who sits high above the generations of men and all the changes of time.

The rare and pure magnanimity depicted in *Verses* 29 and 30 lifts Job to a still higher pinnacle of moral greatness, a pinnacle on which the noblest of our race have found it hard to maintain their footing. "Love your enemies" is a Christian precept very indifferently observed even in Christendom itself. It was not a *heathen* who spoke of the pleasure most men take in the misfortunes of their friends. But with quiet and obvious sincerity Job affirms that he took no pleasure in the misfortunes of his *enemies*; that he neither wished them evil, nor exulted when evil found them out. Tried even by the Christian standard, the man who exults neither in his own prosperity (*Verse* 25), nor in the adversity of his enemy (*Verse* 29), must surely take high rank in the kingdom of heaven.

To us, perhaps, the hospitality described in *Verses* 31 and 32 may seem a far inferior grace to those which Job has already claimed. But to the men of his own day it must have been an impressive and speaking fact that, "instead of shutting himself up in an inaccessible fortress, like most Eastern nobles in unsettled districts," the fields of which lay open to the raids of roving clans, Job's "door *gave* on the street," on the road, and stood open to all comers; that his hospitality was so lavish and unbounded, as that "the men of his tent"—*i.e.*, the members of his vast household—could proudly demand, "Who is there that he has not sumptuously entertained?" This virtue of hospitality—a virtue that needed to be enjoined even on the bishops of the early Church—has come down to the Arabs of our own day, among whom "to open a guest-chamber" is a common synonym for setting up a house of their own.

In *Verses* 33, 34, Job claims a plain and perfect sincerity. Though "the general stream of his life," its whole manner and course, give so good a proclamation of him, may he not have been guilty of secret sins which, had they been known, would have stained all his virtues, and marked him for "a spotted and inconstant man?" Canon Cook holds that in *Verse* 33 we have a clear and "explicit admission that he was not free from sin which, had it been concealed, would have been iniquity, but, laid bare by honest confession, lost that character, and deserved pardon." But is that so? I doubt whether Job admits, whether he does not rather deny, that the outward

beauty of his life had been blotted by sins at variance with its obvious tenour. It is quite true, as we have more than once seen, that he nowhere claims an absolute sinlessness, that his largest assertions of innocence leave room for errors without which he would have been more than man. And it *may be* that he both admits evil intents, and pleads that, when unlawful impulse awoke within him,

His act did not o'ertake his bad intent,
And must be buried but as an intent
That perish'd by the way ;

or that, when his intent was overtaken by his act, he had purged himself from guilt by frankly confessing it. But throughout this Chapter he has laid such emphasis on his purity of intention and motive, as well as on that of his actions, as to render it improbable that he should close it with an acknowledgment whether of secret or of open guilt. It is better, it is more in harmony with the present mode and tone of his mind, to understand him as repudiating the charge of covert and hidden sin ; as reiterating the assurance that he " knows nothing against himself " to account for his loss of the Divine goodwill ; as pleading that

his true eyes had never practised how
To cloak offences with a cunning brow.

But if the general tenour of these Verses is disputed, so also is the rendering of the first line of *Verse 33*. Many, perhaps most, of the best Commentators read it,

If, *like Adam*, I have covered my sin,—

a reading for which I must give my vote, though I have not ventured to put it into the text. In the Hebrew, *âdâm* stands both for man in general and for the father of us all, so that the "*like âdâm*" of this Verse is susceptible of either rendering. Some legend of Paradise, moreover, and of the sin that lost us Paradise, may be found in the traditions of almost every race. All the world over, Adam, hiding himself from the voice of the Lord among the trees of the Garden, stands as the type of man who sins, and seeks to hide his sin from "the eye of offended Heaven." Very probably, therefore, Job here

compares, or rather contrasts, himself with the sinful father of the race, and affirms that *he* has not sought to cloak or dissemble his sin before Almighty God, to confine the knowledge of it to his own "bosom;" nay, that he has no such fatal and inward-eating transgression to conceal. Had he had any such sin to hide, he would have gone in constant dread of detection and exposure; he would have been afraid to take part in the public assemblies held in the Gate or on the *mezbele*; he would have feared, first and most of all, the "families" of his own tribe, since these were the most likely to detect his iniquity. Instead of publicly challenging inquiry, and maintaining his integrity, as he had done from the very moment he "opened his mouth," he would have sat silent and ashamed in the dark seclusion of his tent.

And now (*Verses 35-37*) he suddenly breaks in upon the sequent flow of picturesque phrases, in which he has been delineating the happy days that are no more, to repeat his challenge. With the keen intensity of highly-wrought passion, he once more, and for the last time, appeals to God for a fair and open trial; and once more, and for the last time, he proclaims his integrity to Heaven.

Many translators sacrifice the effect of this abrupt exclamation by completing the sentence of the previous Verse thus: "*Then* had I kept silence, and not gone out of my door." But to leave the sentence incomplete, as though, choked by the rush of rising emotion, Job could not pause to carry it to an orderly close, comes nearer, I think, to the intention of the Poet, and is surely far more impressive. Indeed, few strokes, whether of nature or of art, could be more impressive than that, when our minds have been held in long suspense as one picturesque clause succeeds to another, till we long for the words that shall end the suspense, instead of being soothed by some felicitous close, our attention should be roused and stimulated afresh by an outburst of eager passionate appeal.

It is the old touch, too, to which Job responds so eagerly and passionately. Again and again, during his controversy with the Friends, they had pierced him to the quick by alleging, or assuming, secret sins in him, at variance with the

known and godly tenour of his life, as the cause of all his woes. Again and again we have seen him goaded to wild resentment and frenzied assaults on the justice of God and man by this very charge. And now, though their voices are mute, it is the same intolerable thought which agitates him once more. It is while he is asserting his clear sincerity, while he is repudiating the mere thought of some occult guilt, some bosom sin, that he breaks into his last appeal to the omniscient and almighty Judge.

The appeal, as was natural, takes a legal form, and by its very form suggests an age of advanced, yet imperfect civilization, such, for example, as existing monuments prove to have obtained in Egypt before the earliest date to which Job has been assigned. An age possessed of courts of justice, in which a written accusation and a written defence were demanded, must have been far removed from the barbarity, the rude and informal administration of the primitive races; while yet an age in which grave legal documents were authenticated by a sign, or mark, instead of a written name, must obviously have been lacking in general culture and education; and the phrase I have translated, "Here is my *signature*," means, literally, "Here is my *sign*:"—*da ist mein Kreutz*, Ewald translates it. Many an Arab chieftain could do no more at this day, however, than affix his mark; a hundred years ago it may be doubted whether more than one Englishman in ten, or more than one English squire in ten, could have done more; while three or four centuries ago most even of our great barons could but have drawn their "cross" or affixed their seal: and yet even then there had long been much and high culture among us, and an elaborate system of jurisprudence.

But who is the "Adversary" whom Job cites before the Divine Judge? The hypothesis that the Friends collectively are to be taken as the Adversary, and that their speeches reduced to writing contain the counts of his "indictment," while the Soliloquy of Job, which he is about to authenticate with his signature or mark, is the defence on which he relies, is not only too tame to be admitted for a moment, it is contrary to the whole tone and spirit of the Poem, and even to the plain meaning of this exclamation itself; since Job is here ejaculating

a wish, and a wish he scarcely expects to be gratified, that his Adversary *would* prepare a formal indictment against him. What he feels most keenly is—for the extravagant misrepresentations of the Friends have long since been refuted—that he has no definite and plausible charge to meet, that he cannot discover *what* it is for which he is being smitten with stroke on stroke.

Nor can we for a moment entertain the hypothesis that at this point Job becomes dimly aware of the dark figure which stands behind the Friends, prompting their hard thoughts of him, as it had before stood beside the throne of God, moving *Him* against Job without cause; for this hypothesis is still more contrary to the whole spirit of the Poem, in which Job is throughout in utter ignorance of the Accuser who secretly instigates God and man against him.

It is difficult to see how any thoughtful student of the Book should feel in need of hypotheses so forced and unnatural as these. If there is one fact that stands out more clearly in the Poem than another, it is that, to Job's apprehension at least, God Himself, so long his Friend, and in some mysterious way still his friend, has turned to be his Enemy. It is *God* of whom he is in quest, whose voice he craves to hear, whose indictment he yearns to see, against whom, yet also from whom, he demands justice. His very Judge is also his Adversary; and yet he has no fear, for his Judge is also his Witness (Compare Chap. xvi. 18–21), and his Adversary his Friend. We have studied the Poem to little purpose if we have not learned from it that these seeming contradictions in the relation of God toward him were all felt by Job, felt to be true, however contradictory; nay, that they *were* true, difficult as it may be to reduce them to a logical and coherent statement. And, therefore, we need not go in quest of the Adversary. Not only does Job twice expressly call God his Foe (Chaps. ix. 15; xvi. 9), but throughout his long weary trial he is seeking for a God he cannot find, who of set purpose evades his search (Comp. Chap. xxiii. 3–9).

God, then, is the Adversary whom Job still yearns to meet; the cause of whose anger he must ascertain before he can hope for peace; whose very indictment of him, if only

he could obtain it, he would parade as an ornament and distinction; to be "near" whom is his one supreme desire, even though He should still be his Enemy as well as his Judge. He has nothing to hide from Him; he longs to lay bare his soul to Him, to tell Him the very number of his steps. On whatever terms it may be granted, all he craves for is fellowship, intercourse, with the God he has loved, and loves, so well.

The closing Verses of the Chapter (*Verses 38-40*) have much exercised the critics. Even the most sober of them are sure that these Verses have fallen out of their true place, though they can produce no MSS. evidence in favour of their conclusion, and propose to insert them after Verse 8, or Verse 12, or Verse 23. It must be admitted that there is much to suggest this conclusion; and I, for one, was quite prepared to accept it. Viewed merely as a work of art, it might have been better had the Chapter closed with the impassioned and sublime apostrophe of Verses 35-37. And yet, would it have been better? Is there not, after all, something artificial rather than artistic in the rhetoric of climaxes? Many a fine orator, carried out of and above himself by a passing wave of excitement or enthusiasm, hesitates—and I think wisely hesitates—to close with words so much above his usual level, and lets both himself and his audience gently down to earth again with a few final sentences pitched in a lower key. And not a few of the difficulties which the critics have discovered in the structure of this Poem spring from the fact that they judge it by inappropriate and even inadequate canons of art. Even a modern and Western poet might have scrupled to bring "the pleas of Job" to an end with a high-pitched exclamation or apostrophe. And even if *he* had preferred to close with a passionate climax, does it follow that an Eastern poet of an antique age should be tried by his conception of an artistic close? Surely it would be but wise and modest of us, before we undertake to recast the Chapter, to study the style and manner of the Poet we are seeking to interpret; to ask whether or not the passage as it stands is not in accord with his canons and his practice of art; and even to shew a

little deference for a man so much more highly gifted than ourselves. And when once we raise the question, I am persuaded we shall leave the Chapter alone. Climaxes are *not* in his manner. As a rule, when he is swept up into his highest moods, he does not break off while he still hangs high in the heaven of thought and emotion, but, like the lark, sings on till he nears the ground. In this respect Chapter xix. affords a curiously close and instructive parallel to Chapter xxxi. There, as here, Job rises into his most impassioned mood, touching his highest point as he cuts his immortal Inscription on the Rock (*Verses 23-27*); yet even in the last Verse of the Inscription itself he lapses into a calmer tone, while in the two Verses that follow he comes down to the plain and takes up his controversy with the Friends in a still lower and more colloquial key. It may very well be, therefore, that it was the intention of the Poet not to close Chapter xxxi. with Job's sublime appeal to his Judge, but to shade it off and tone it down by letting him resume that description of his past felicity out of which he had suddenly soared up in his cry for justice.

These closing Verses are, as on this hypothesis we might expect they would be, singularly melodious and tranquil in their tone, as if, now that the pent-in passion had found vent, Job could look with a calmer and more pensive eye on the happy days that were gone. In a fine pathetic figure he denies that his land had any reason to disown him, to cry out against him as against one who had possessed himself of it by violence or fraud, or to weep as though it mourned for its rightful but dispossessed lord.¹ If he had eaten the fruit of fields which he had not duly purchased, or to obtain which he had caused the rightful owner to breathe out his life, he prays that instead of wheat the thistle may spring up in them,

and all the idle weeds
That grow in our sustaining corn.

¹ Ewald has a good rendering of Verse 38—

“Wenn über mich mein Acker schreit,
Und sämtlich seine Furchen weinen.”

At this point Job ceases to plead with God, as at the close of Chapter xxvi. he had ceased to argue with the Friends. We shall not hear his voice again till *he* hears the Voice he had so long yearned to hear. And before we part with him it is obvious to remark that, in this long agony and strife with the Power of Darkness, the victory is clearly with Job. Satan had engaged that, if only he were allowed to "touch all that he had," even to "his bone and his flesh," Job would renounce God and die. He *had* touched, and blighted, both him and all he had. And yet, so far from renouncing God, Job draws near to Him, cleaves to Him with an inalienable affection and trust, and can conceive of no honour or delight comparable with being admitted to his Presence, even though it be to receive his sentence from the lips of his Judge. It is the very triumph of disinterested piety and devoted love. Painful and mysteriously unjust as is the doom that hangs over him, vast and heartshaking as is the change in all his outward conditions, his heart knows no change; his fidelity never wavers, or wavers only as the magnetic needle which, though it tremble, points steadfastly to the Pole.

But if the description Job gives of himself in this Second Monologue be true—and by their silence they seem to consent to it; if this was what Job was really like, what are we to think of the Friends who have so "misquoted" him to us? how are we to forgive them for the cruel libels they have "stained him with"? If we would do them justice, we must remember how strangely the judgment of good men may be warped by theological prepossessions. Holding, as they sincerely held, that accidents were judgments, that suffering was an infallible proof of sin, their theory compelled them to assume that so great a sufferer as Job must be a great sinner, however successfully he had hid his wickedness in his own bosom. It would be only too easy, if it were necessary, to adduce modern instances of a similar warp in the judgment of sincere and devout theologians. Many a good man has been denounced as a heretic, and even suspected of immorality by men as good as himself, but of a narrower mind. Most of the more original and thoughtful teachers even of modern times, and not a few perfectly "sound" divines, have been

charged with fostering "a secret unbelief more to be dreaded than open infidelity," by devout but superficial men to whom every instructed scribe who brings forth from the storehouse things new as well as old seems to disparage that which is old by the mere act of producing that which is new. And with these modern instances before us, we need not be surprised to find that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, misled by their narrow dogma, discovered a secret immorality in the pure and noble life of the Man of Uz, which was more to be dreaded than the open and glaring immorality of which they themselves were guilty in bearing false witness against him.

SECTION VII.

THE INTERVENTION OF ELIHU.

CHAPTERS XXXII.—XXXVII.

WE are arrested on the very threshold of this section of the Book. Before we can enter upon it we *must*, for no choice is allowed us, raise and determine the question: Is the intervention of Elihu an integral part of the original Poem, or is it only a late, spurious, and worthless addition to it by some unknown hand? From the very first, Commentators have been very hard on Elihu. Ancient Jewish rabbis pronounced him "Balaam in disguise." Many fathers, both of the Eastern and of the Western Churches, held him up to scorn as a type of the false wisdom, the broken and misleading lights, of heathen philosophy. By modern Commentators he has been stigmatized as "a pert braggart boy" of "weak rambling speech," "a mere shadow" (Herder), "a babbler" (Umbreit), "a most conceited and arrogant young man" (Hahn): Merx, indeed, carries his contempt for Elihu so far as altogether to ignore, if not to annihilate, him, by leaving his orations wholly untouched, although they are to be found in every MS. of Job which we possess.

On the other hand, one of the most recent translators of the Book (Coleman, 1869), on the express ground that Elihu's language would be unbecoming in a mere mortal, that it is too wise and too authoritative for merely human lips, actually affirms him to be no less than "the Second Person of the Sacred Trinity," and with a sublime audacity translates the Hebrew for "Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the tribe of Ram," by, "Elihu, *the blessed Son of God, the Despised One, of the lineage of the Most High*"!

More sober judges than these have their doubts of Elihu;

they question whether the speeches attributed to him can fairly be regarded as part of the original Poem, and lean to the conclusion that they were inserted either by the Poet himself at some subsequent revision of his work, or by some later and inferior hand.

These doubts, like the adverse conclusions of the "higher criticism," are based on the following considerations. (1) That Aramaic forms of speech abound in this section of the Poem to a very unusual degree. (2) That at least the boastful exordium (Chaps. xxxii. 6-xxxiii. 7) to Elihu's "discourse" is wholly out of keeping with the Poet's manner and style. (3) That the part played by Elihu is not essential to the drama; that even when he breaks into his "discourse" he contributes nothing of any value to the argument of the Poem: so that both the man himself and his orations might be detached from it without any sensible loss, or even with obvious and positive gain.

Now, I am not of those who "deny the value of criticism and refuse to accept the evidence of partial compilation and redaction patent in the Biblical texts;" but surely the evidence should be both "patent" and conclusive before we are summoned to yield to it. And I submit that the presumption is in favour of the text as settled by a careful collation of the MSS., and even in favour of the traditional interpretation of the text. Before we advocate any change on the sole evidence of internal criticism or evidence, it would only be fair to study the passage in question with a view to ascertain whether, as it stands, it does not fall in, if not with our modern canons of art, yet with the design and the art canons of the Oriental poet or prophet to whom, on sufficient diplomatic evidence, it has been attributed from the earliest recoverable date. And if this course had been taken, if these Chapters had been approached with a prejudice in favour of the original text as established by external evidence, instead of a prejudice in favour of change; if, in short, the destructive critics had not shewn "that irritable kind of intellect," common to their school, "which sets an undue value on novel theories and novel interpretations," it may be doubted whether they would have found much weight

in the arguments that have led them to ascribe the intervention of Elihu to a later hand, or to denounce it as a fraudulent and irrelevant interpolation. For myself, I confess that, as I approached this section of the Poem, I quite expected, so high and numerous are the authorities who have impugned it, to be convinced that it was at least a later addition to it, inserted either by the original author himself, or by some other poet who was moved by one and the selfsame Spirit; and it is with no small surprise that I have been led by a patient study of it, and after careful consideration of the objections alleged against it, to conclude that these objections carry very little weight, and that the discourses of Elihu form an integral part of the original work. To be quite frank, it is with a certain regret, as well as surprise, that I have reached this conclusion; for it imposes on me the difficult and unwelcome task of vindicating it: and I cannot but be conscious that I lay myself open to the charge of arrogance and presumption in contesting the verdict of critics many of whom are so much more able and learned than myself. Every man, however, like each of the Evangelists, is bound to speak the truth "according to" him: and therefore I submit for consideration the following answers to the objections most commonly alleged against Elihu, and the part he plays, and the words he speaks.

1. That Aramaisms should abound in his "discourse," so far from being an argument against its genuineness and authenticity, becomes an argument in its favour the moment we observe that Elihu is introduced to us as an *Aramæan Arab*: for who should use Aramæan words and idioms if not the one speaker in the Poem who is of Aramæan blood? That the style of this Section differs largely from that of other sections of the Poem, and is in some ways inferior to it, is, or may be, conceded: but how long has it been an offence against dramatic art that the diction of an actor and speaker should correspond to his age, and position, and race? Good critics, such as Ewald, Schlottmann, and Davidson, find fine distinctions of idiom and style, a characteristic tone, in the speeches of each of the three Friends—all old or elderly men, and all more or less closely akin. Might we not fairly expect

then, to find on the lips of a young man, and a young man of different type and blood, a still larger and more characteristic deviation from the common standard of language and manner? Are we to admire the Author for the delicate discrimination which leads him to put characteristic language into the lips of the Friends, and to blame him, or even to deny his hand, when he puts language equally characteristic and appropriate into the mouth of Elihu? Whatever "the higher criticism" has attempted, or may attempt, on *Henry V.*, it would be hard to persuade Englishmen that Fluellen was not created by the same capacious mind which gave birth to the King himself and his statesmen and captains, albeit "the care and valour of this Welshman were a little out of the fashion" of the time, and Shakespeare endeavours—not with complete success, be it said with reverence—to give him the mental and verbal idioms, and even the very pronunciation, peculiar to the English-speaking Welsh.¹

2. So, too, with the boastful exordium to Elihu's discourse, which seems most of all to have stirred the bile of the critics, which has led them to stigmatize him as a "braggart boy," and to doom him to something very like capital punishment, it may be well to ask, before we consent to that doom, whether in his conditions such an exordium might not be natural and consistent. Far too much stress has been laid on this point. Elihu is not guilty, as I hope to shew in detail when we study his orations verse by verse, of a tithe of the conceit and self-commendation which has been attributed to him. He is far indeed from being the vulgar and fluent "braggart" he has been painted. But, granting to the full all that has been alleged against him, I would still submit that he does but carry himself in a manner characteristic of his race. If travellers are to be believed, the boastful and long-

¹ Even Prince Hal himself speaks a very different language, and takes a very different tone, when rioting with his boon companions to that which he employs when, having "turned away his former self," he resumes his majesty and "shews his sail of greatness" as he discusses affairs of state with his nobles and prelates. And I do not yet despair of seeing some grave German critic of the "higher" school contrasting the style and idioms of the two so-different series of scenes, and authoritatively assigning the Falstaff scenes to the third or fourth *redacteur* of the Plays.

winded accost so repulsive to the English mind is common to many Oriental races, and may be heard to this day when Arab meets Arab in the Desert. So, also, I have somewhere read, though I cannot now recover the reference, that in their modern dramas and rhapsodies characters continually introduce themselves to the audience with a boastful recital of their claims to attention similar to the opening sentences of Elihu's discourse. Nor is this custom confined to the illiterate—to the wandering and fighting clans and to the rhapsodists who amuse their leisure.—Boasts far more turgid than those attributed to Elihu may be encountered in the writings of grave Arabian historians and poets. We have a capital illustration of this singular habit in the celebrated Arab historian of the seventeenth century, Al-Makkari—or, to give him his full style, Ahmed Ibn-Mohammed Al-Makkari Attelemsari—known in the East as “the Western Traditionist and Bright Star of Religion.” In the preface to his curious and erudite “History of the Mohammedan Dynasties of Spain,” he thus describes his labours in behalf of a grateful and admiring posterity: “We had, while residing in the West . . . laboured hard on the history of Andalus; we had collected for the description of that country and its inhabitants the most interesting and valuable documents, and the most complete written as well as oral information. We had described minutely the aptitude and superiority of the Andalusians in the sciences, their forwardness and courage in attacking the cruel enemy of God; the enchanting beauty of the spots they formerly inhabited, the sites of their contests and battles; *of all which we had amassed treasures enough to satisfy the wishes and ambition of the most excellent historian, and collected a sufficient number of unique pearls to bewitch the mind of the reader, and gathered in the delightful paths of their literature flowers enough to gratify the senses of the studious, and strung together many useful and hitherto unknown things in a manner to make the eyes of the learned and ingenious start out of their orbits with pleasure and astonishment. All this, moreover, was written in such an elevated and flowing style that, had it been delivered by the common crier, it would have made even the stones deaf.*” If

this stately and highflown vaunt be, as it is, characteristic of Arab literature from the earliest times—though I confess *this* to be the most delicious instance of it I have ever met—we need not be surprised to find some touch of it in the opening sentences of Elihu. No picture of Arab life would be complete without it. To blot it out of the Poem would be to remove one of its most effective patches of “local colour.” Some touches of it we have met already—in Chapter xiii. 1–22, for example, in the elaborate preface to Job’s memorable Declaration or Defence (Chaps. xiii. 23–xiv. 22), and even—though here in a much softened and half-concealed form—in Chapters xxix. and xxxi. : it simply culminates in Chapters xxxii. and xxxiii.

3. To this general defence of Elihu’s exordium, so immodest to many critics, and yet to an Oriental ear suggestive of modesty, as implying that the speaker is fain to prove himself not altogether unworthy of the company into which he thrusts himself, I would add the following considerations:—

(α) Elihu was a *young* man ; and youth is commonly positive, dogmatic, impatient.

(β) If Elihu was, as there seems reason to believe, a *modest* young man, impelled and constrained by the ardour of his convictions and emotions to thrust himself into an argument conducted by his elders, constrained even to rebuke and correct men venerable for wisdom as well as for age, like most modest and sensitive young men in that case, he would be likely to break through the restraints of youth and reverence with an effort, a rush, which would carry him to the opposite extreme—his very modesty making him seem immodest, his very reverence irreverent.

(γ) In the first five Verses of Chapter xxxii. we are told no less than four times that Elihu’s “*anger* was kindled.” We may therefore fairly assume that he began to speak in a white heat of passion and excitement. Hence he would naturally speak with a vehemence and impetuosity which would throw the more turbid elements of his nature to the surface ; while, as his excitement found vent in speech, his spirit would calm down, and he would rise into a sobriety

and elevation of thought in happy contrast to his opening words.

(δ) It was, as we shall see, a *new* thought which he had to utter—new to him himself perhaps, certainly new to the old men to whom he addressed himself; and these were men to whom that which was new and strange was also questionable, heretical, and even damnable; so that, bold as he was, Elihu hardly “durst shew them his conviction” (Chap. xxxii. 6): and what is more excited and boastful than fear?

(ε) To all this I may still add that, on my own mind, this much-incriminated exordium of Elihu’s leaves the impression that it is little more, after all, than a string of scholastic formulæ, sentences which were the current coin of debate, mere “common forms” of speech, the ancient Oriental analogues of the logical and rhetorical forms which were familiar in the Schools of Europe during the Middle Ages. Of course it is quite impossible to prove the accuracy of such an impression,—Delitzsch, however, shews that he shares it when he affirms that Elihu “speaks more *in the tone of scholastic controversy*” than any of the other combatants in this logical fray; and therefore I can only suggest it for consideration, since we have no extra-Biblical specimens of the Arab literature of that distant age. But every civilized race has, or has had, these common forms of debate, and even some uncivilized races: the Zulus, for example, are said to excel in debate, and to have attained an art and skill in oratory which it would tax all the resources of an English barrister or statesman to encounter. Such forms are a great resource for unfledged orators; and as a rule, I think, they are more generally used in the opening sentences of an oration, until the speaker warms to his work. Hence, to me, Elihu shapes himself as a young scholarly Arab, flourishing his controversial weapons, and something too conscious of their play and glitter, until he forgets all about them in the gathering heat of thought and emotion.

4. The most fatal objection to him, if it were true, or even if it could be plausibly sustained, would be that he is superfluous; that he adds nothing to the argument of the Poem; that his intervention only arrests the progress of the Drama

and is utterly out of keeping with it; that it would gain much if he and his part were clean cut out of it. Against this cruel and formidable objection I would plead—

(a) That Elihu represents the audience, the circle of interested bystanders on the *mezbele*, whom, absorbed in the argument, we are apt to forget, despite Job's occasional allusions to them, and the indirect *ad captandum* appeals of the Friends to their convictions and prejudices. And what should persuade us of their presence, and of their profound interest in every turn of this great controversy, if not the fact that one of them, when the Friends are put to silence, can no longer contain himself, *must* speak that he may get him ease (Chap. xxxii. 19, 20), and eagerly presses forward that he may take part in the affray?

(β) Elihu also represents the rising thought of the young men of the tribes, who seem to have lost faith in the accepted dogma, that sin and suffering were strict correlatives, before their elders had emancipated themselves from it; and thus supplies a very genuine and valuable addition both to the argument and to the dramatic action of the Poem.

(γ) He delivers the *human* verdict on the Controversy between Job and the Friends, which we want to hear almost as much as the Divine verdict; saying, in effect, what the Commentators have been saying ever since, that *both* were wrong, that a higher solution of the problem than they had attained was both requisite and attainable, and indicating the direction in which it was to be found.

(δ) For what he really contributes to the main argument of the Book is that suffering may be medicinal, corrective, fructifying, as well as punitive. The Friends had proceeded on the assumption, an assumption abundantly refuted by Job, that his calamities sprang, and could only spring, from his transgressions. In their theology there was no room for any other conclusion. But, obviously, there is another interpretation of the function of adversity which needs to be discussed, if the discussion is to be complete; and this wider interpretation Elihu seeks to formulate. According to him, God may be moved to chastise men by love as well as by anger; with a view to quicken their conscience, to instruct

their thoughts and give them a larger scope; in order to purge them, that they may bring forth more or better fruit; to rouse them from the lethargy into which, even when they are spiritually alive, they are apt to sink, and to save them from the corruption too often bred even by good customs, if these customs do not grow and change. His main contention has indeed, since his time, become the merest commonplace: we find, and adopt, it in many forms, and are for ever pleading that

Heaven is not angry when He strikes
But most chastises those whom most He likes;

or arguing that

There is some soul of goodness in things evil
Would men observingly distil it out;

or admiring the gracious Providence which raises and purifies men by their very losses and pains,

From seeming evil still educing good.

But this pious commonplace was sufficiently new to Job and his Friends to be startling. It had not occurred to them, or had only occurred to them. It finds no place, or no adequate place, in their controversy; it was not really woven into their argument, though it had been glanced at occasionally by this speaker or that,—after the manner of our Poet, who often sends hints to run before and prepare the way of themes which he afterwards elaborately develops and embellishes. To them, Elihu, when he contends that God often delivers the afflicted *by and through their afflictions*, must have seemed to be either uttering a dangerous heresy, or speaking as one who had received new light and inspiration from on high.

(ε) But besides this new and surprising truth, which has become a truism, Elihu adds much to the main argument of the Poem, and connects his contribution with that argument in so many ways as to render it probable almost to demonstration that his Intervention was part of the original plan of the work. It is not only that this section is attached by many threads of thought and expression to the other sections of the Poem, threads too minute and subtle to have been inserted by any later hand. Nor is it only that the fine

description of a thunderstorm with which the final oration concludes (Chaps. xxxvi. 26—xxxvii. 24) most fitly and nobly introduces the Theophany which closes the Book, depicting the "tempest" out of which Jehovah speaks. But, as Professor Davidson has pointed out, the contention of Elihu meets, and refutes, the main positions taken up by Job. To the very end (Chap. xxxi. 35—37) Job had demanded audience of God, implying or affirming that he cried out for Him in vain (Chap. xxx. 20—24). Throughout his argument, and still to the very end, he had impugned the justice of God and of his rule over men. And even in his Soliloquy he had asserted the mystery of Providence, and the impossibility of apprehending or vindicating it (Chap. xxviii.). These, indeed, are his main positions; and Elihu assails, and carries, them all. To his contention that God would not speak to men, Elihu replies that God *does* speak to men in many ways—instructing them by dreams, reproving and correcting them by the natural and inevitable results of their own actions, in order that by both these—by experience and by quickened and suggestive ideals—He may redeem their souls and bring them back to the light of life (Chap. xxxiii. 14—30). To his contention that God was unjust, since the righteous man was none the better for his righteousness, Elihu replies that the very creation and continuance of the world prove God to be good; that He who has the whole universe in charge cannot be inequitable (Chap. xxxiv. 10—15); that the Ruler of the world must be just, since injustice means anarchy, and anarchy dissolution (Chap. xxxiv. 16—30); that, so far from men gaining nothing by their righteousness, their courses of action, whether good or evil, must tell upon their own character and conditions, since they cannot affect Him who sits above the clouds (Chap. xxxv. 2—8); and that, when they cry out in vain under their calamities and oppressions, it is because they cry amiss—from mere fear and pain, not from love of righteousness and trust in God their Maker (Chap. xxxv. 9—16). To his contention that the Divine Providence is an inscrutable mystery, Elihu, without for a moment assuming to solve the whole mystery of Providence, replies that the very sufferings of which Job complains open the eyes and hearts of men to

a perception of the meaning and design of Providence sufficient for all practical, *i.e.*, all moral, purposes, teaching them their sinfulness and God's goodness, and that the whole course of his Providential rule takes its colour from the strife between these two (Chaps. xxxvi. and xxxvii.). "And while he is descanting on the greatness of God, *which is but the other side of his goodness*, displayed in the storm-cloud that he sees rising, suddenly he is interrupted, and God Himself speaks out of the storm."

Let these considerations be but fairly weighed, and the candid student will at least hesitate before he consents to cut out Elihu's part from this noble drama, at the bidding of critics who seem transported beyond all bounds of reason and patience by the mere mention of his name. Whatever else he may be, Elihu is no "bombastic braggart," or "chattering trifler," or "conceited coxcomb," who darkens counsel with words devoid of wisdom. To any one who has honestly and carefully studied his argument, it can hardly fail to appear that the critics who denounce him in such terms as these misconceive him as completely and sinistrously as Job himself was misconceived by the Friends; and it would be no great marvel should some of their ugly epithets come home to roost.

Among the objections which an adverse and too peremptory criticism has accumulated against this section of the Poem, one of the slenderest and weakest—though much stress has been laid upon it—is that Elihu does not appear either in the Prologue or in the Epilogue; that he is not so much as introduced to us until the Poem is drawing to a close. But unless we are to evolve the scheme of an antique Oriental poem out of our own consciousness, or demand that it should conform to our own arbitrary canons of art, instead of carefully studying the Poem to ascertain on what scheme it was actually modelled, such an objection proves nothing but a determination to *make* the faults it cannot find. It is a sufficient reply to the objection, that Elihu *is* introduced to us, and even formally and elaborately introduced, as soon as he comes forward, as soon, *i.e.*, as we need to know him. The Friends were not introduced to us till they were wanted, till the action of the Drama compelled the

Poet to make them known to us; and even then they were not introduced so formally as Elihu, nor at such length. Elihu is not in the Prologue because he is not to take part in the argument of the Poem till toward its close; and he is not in the Epilogue because the anger of the Lord was not kindled against him as it was against the Friends, because, so far as he went, he had spoken of God aright, while they had not.

CHAPTER XXXII. VERSES 1-6.

CHAP. XXXII.—*So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. (2) Then was kindled the anger of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the tribe of Ram; against Job was his anger kindled, because he justified himself rather than God. (3) Also against his three friends was his anger kindled, because they could find no answer to Job and yet condemned him. (4) For Elihu had delayed to answer Job because they were older than he; (5) but when Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, his anger was kindled. (6) And Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, answered and said:*

From Chapter xxxii., Verse 1, we learn, as we learn more fully from Verses 15 and 16, that the Friends had ceased to argue with Job, not because he had convinced them—for, to them, he was still only “righteous in his own eyes”—but simply because they could not move him from his position; because, though their arguments had broken down, they had “no more,” or no more cogent, arguments to allege. Our inference from their silence is thus confirmed and established.

Verse 2.—The word *Elihu* means, “My God is He;” the word *Barachel*, “May God bless.” As proper names they imply that Elihu belonged to a family in which the great primitive tradition of one God and Lord over all was retained and accepted. The added tribal name—*Buzite*—indicates that Elihu was an *Aramæan*, since it marks descent from Nahor, Abram’s brother, through *Buz* his son; and yet an *Aramæan Arab*, since Jeremiah (Chap. xxv. 23) reckons the Buzites among the Arabs proper, who were distinguished by their “shaven cheeks” or temples, *i.e.*, who cut their hair short all round because they held, with St. Paul, that “if a man have

long hair it is a shame to him."¹ Within the Buzite clan Elihu sprang from the family of *Ram*; but of this family nothing is now known, though no doubt it once helped the readers of "Job" to identify him.

Elihu, then, is somewhat more fully and precisely introduced to us than any other of the interlocutors of the Poem save Job himself; and his Aramæan descent goes far to explain the Aramaic flavour of his "discourse."

In *Verses* 2 and 3 we are told what it was that induced and constrained him to thrust himself into the discussion. He had observed with indignation (1) that Job had justified himself at the expense of God; and (2) that the Friends had condemned Job although they could not refute him. It was not the mere fact that Job had held fast his integrity, that he had vindicated himself against the aspersions of the Friends, which had moved Elihu to anger; but that, in order to vindicate himself and refute them, he had charged God with injustice. Nor was his anger kindled against the Friends simply because they had condemned Job; but because they had condemned him for sins of which they had no shadow of proof, and without really clearing the character of the God for whom they assumed to speak. So far, therefore, Elihu is at one with Jehovah Himself; for He too rebukes Job for so asserting his own righteousness as to condemn Him (Chap. xl. 8), and *his* anger is kindled against the Friends for aspersing Job to vindicate Him (Chap. xlii. 7, 8).

Full of words and arguments which he felt to be far more cogent than any they had adduced, waxing wellnigh desperate at seeing so momentous a theme so grossly mishandled, he had yet restrained himself out of deference to the age of the Friends; but now, when they have manifestly failed to solve the problem submitted to them, and even Job has nothing further to allege in his own defence, he feels that he may give vent to his repressed indignation without any lack of modesty or courtesy, and state as best he can the thoughts which have

¹ Herodotus (iii. 8) describes the Arabs as cutting their hair *à la Bacchus*, and explains, "Now their practice is to cut it in a ring, away from the temples." Comp. Jer. ix. 26; xlix. 32 (in the Original).

risen up within him as he has listened to their long and indecisive debate (*Verses 5, 6*). Accordingly, he proceeds in four separate discourses, which yet are one discourse, to meet the arguments of Job in what he holds to be a wiser and more convincing method than that of the old men who, as all admit, had met them neither wisely nor fairly; and to prove (*a*) that God does speak to men in many ways, though Job had complained that He would not and did not speak (Chaps. xxxii. 6—xxxiii. 33); (*β*) that God is just, though Job had charged Him with injustice (Chap. xxxiv.); (*γ*) that the righteous man is the better for his righteousness, though Job had argued that he was not (Chap. xxxv.); and (*δ*) that the mystery of Providence, though it must ever remain a mystery, is not so utterly inscrutable as Job had alleged (Chaps. xxxvi., xxxvii.).

FIRST DISCOURSE.

CHAPTERS XXXII. 6—XXXIII. 33.

In his opening discourse Elihu undertakes to prove both that God does speak to men at sundry times, and in divers manners, and that He chastens men in love rather than in anger,—the proof being that the Divine chastening is corrective and medicinal:

'tis a physic

That's bitter to sweet end.

This double thesis is woven into one with singular skill, and yet in the simplest and most natural way. His first thesis, that God speaks to men, Elihu proves (1) by generalizing the experience of Eliphaz (Comp. Chap. xxxiii. 15–18 with Chap. iv. 12–21, and especially Chap. xxxiii. 15 with Chap. iv. 13), and shewing that as God spoke to *him* in dream and vision, so also He speaks to all men; (2) by generalizing the experience of Job, and shewing that all men are taught, as he was taught, by pain, by the discipline of sorrow and experience; and (3) by generalizing (as I suspect) his own experience, and shewing

that as he himself had gained his new "conviction" by an angel or messenger, who had interpreted him to himself, so also all men are "shewn what is right" by some of the great company of teachers and interpreters at the command of God. But while thus proving his first thesis, Elihu is careful to prove his second also. For again and again (Chap. xxxiii. 17, 18, 23-26, 29, 30) he points out that the end of God in these several modes of disclosing his will to men is an end of mercy and compassion; that He speaks to them in order to train them in righteousness, and thus to bring back their souls from death, that they may grow light in the light of life. In this simple yet skilful way his two themes are fused into a single argument of remarkable and perennial interest and force.

But this argument is preceded by the exordium, which has so deeply—and, as I think, so unreasonably—stirred the ire of the critics. For Chapter xxxii. contains the general exordium to his whole "discourse;" while in Chapter xxxiii. Verses 1-7, we have only the exordium to the first section of that discourse. Before we touch the argument of Elihu, then, we must at least glance at this general exordium, in which he addresses himself to the Friends, and, as I am inclined to believe, to the circle of bystanders, before he enters on his reply to Job. I am much mistaken if a fair and sympathetic exposition of it will not suffice to clear it from the aspersions which have been so long and so plentifully lavished upon it.

CHAPTERS XXXII. AND XXXIII.

- CHAP. XXXII. *Young am I, and ye are very old ;
 Therefore I was afraid,
 And durst not shew you my conviction.*
7. *I said, " Let age speak,
 And the multitude of years teach wisdom : "*
8. *But it is the spirit that is in man,
 And the inspiration of the Almighty which giveth him understanding ;*
9. *It is not the great who are wise,
 Nor the old who understand what is right :*
10. *Therefore I say, " Harken unto me,
 I, even I, will shew you my conviction."*
11. *Behold, I waited for your words,*

- I gave ear to your arguments,
 Till ye had thoroughly searched out what to say;*
 12. *But though I have straitly marked you,
 Lo, none of you hath refuted Job,
 Nor answered his words.*
 13. *Lest ye should say, "We have found out wisdom,"
 God, not man, shall vanquish him.*
 14. *He indeed hath not directed his words against me,
 But neither will I answer him with your arguments.*
 15. *They were broken down; they answered no more;
 They were bereft of words:*
 16. *And I waited, but they spake not;
 They were at a stand, and answered no more.*
 17. *But, now, I will reply for myself,
 I, even I, will shew my conviction;*
 18. *For I am full of words,
 The spirit in my breast constraineth me;*
 19. *My breast is like wine that hath no vent,
 Like new wineskins it is ready to burst:*
 20. *I will speak that I may get me ease,
 I will open my lips and reply.*
 21. *No, indeed, I will accept no man's person,
 And I will flatter no man;*
 22. *For I know not how to flatter:
 Speedily would my Maker cut me off [if I did].*

- CHAP. XXXIII. *But hear now, O Job, my words,
 And give ear to all my pleas;*
 2. *Behold, now, I open my mouth,
 My tongue speaketh within my palate*
 3. *My words shall be sincere as my heart,
 And my lips shall utter knowledge purely.*
 4. *The Spirit of God hath created me,
 And the inspiration of the Almighty quickened me.*
 5. *Answer me, if thou canst;
 Array thyself before me: stand forth.*
 6. *Lo, I, like you, am of God,
 I also am moulded of clay!*
 7. *Lo, dread of me need not affright thee,
 Nor my dignity weigh heavily upon thee!*
 8. *But thou hast spoken in mine ears,
 And surely I heard a sound of words [such as these]: —*
 9. *"Pure am I, free from sin;*

- Spotless, and there is no iniquity in me :
 10. Behold, He seeketh a quarrel with me,
 He holdeth me for his foe :
 11. He thrusteth my feet into the stocks,
 He watcheth all my ways ! ”
 12. Behold, in this—I will answer thee—thou art not just ;
 For God is too great for man.
 13. Wherefore didst thou contend against Him,
 That of none of his dealings will He give account ?
 14. Nay, but in one way God does speak,
 Yea, in two, only man heedeth not :
 15. In dreams, in visions of the night,
 When deep sleep falleth on men,
 In slumberings upon the bed,
 16. Then He openeth the ear of men,
 And secretly admonisheth them,
 17. That He may withdraw man from his deeds,
 And hide from him his pride ;
 18. That He may hold back his soul from the pit,
 And his life from perishing by the dart :
 19. Or he is chastened with pain upon his couch,
 So that he writeth in great agony,
 20. And his appetite abhorreth food
 And his soul dainty viands ;
 21. His flesh wasteth out of sight,
 And his bones, which were unseen, stand out ;
 22. Yea, his soul draweth nigh to the grave,
 And his life to the angels of death ;
 23. Yet if there be an angel to interpret for him,
 One out of a thousand,
 To shew man what is right,
 24. Then doth He pity him, and say,
 “ Deliver him from going down into the grave,
 I have found a ransom : ”
 25. His flesh becometh fresher than a child's,
 He returneth to the days of his youth ;
 26. He prayeth unto God, and He accepteth him,
 He beholdeth his face with cries of joy ;
 For He restoreth unto man his uprightness :
 27. He chanteth unto men, and saith,
 “ I had sinned and perverted right,
 But I am not requited as I deserve ;
 28. He hath rescued my soul from going down to the grave,

- I live and behold the light."*
29. *Behold, God doeth all these things,*
 Twice, thrice, with man,
30. *To bring back his soul from the grave,*
 That it may grow light in the light of life.
31. *Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me ;*
 Hold thy peace, and I will speak on
32. *Yet if thou hast aught to say, answer thou me,*
 Speak, for I desire to find thee innocent ;
33. *If not, hear thou me :*
 Hold thy peace, and I will teach thee wisdom.

In the exordium of his discourse Elihu first of all addresses himself to the discomfited Friends, alleging (*Chapter xxxii., Verse 6*) his youth and his reverence for age as the reasons which had so long kept him silent, although he was possessed by a strong and intimate "conviction" which he burned to utter. For it is no mere "opinion" that has grown hot within him as he has listened to them, but a deep inward persuasion. He is about to tell them, not what he thinks merely, but what he knows—that of which he is inwardly and fully convinced. According to the received opinion, "With many years is wisdom;" and Elihu is far from denying that age brings sagacity, or from treating with contempt the prophetic strain to which old experience doth attain (*Verse 7*). But age is not the only, not even the highest, source of wisdom. It is as men live and walk after the spirit (*πνεῦμα*) which they derive from God that they prepare themselves to receive the inspiration of the Almighty. *This*—as in another form Job had asserted in *Chapter xxviii.*—is the true source of wisdom, whether to old or young, great or simple (*Verses 8, 9*). And no doubt in this indirect, but surely not immodest, way Elihu does here claim for his "conviction" that he had received it straight from God—that it was too pure and good to be anything short of an inspiration from Heaven. It is because he felt himself "moved" by God that he—even he, young as he is—claims attention for the conviction he is about to "shew" (*Verse 10*). No one can charge him with having been either "swift to speak" or "slow to hear." With curious and

attentive sense he had waited for the words of the aged men who had come to "comfort" Job, and had weighed them when they were uttered. With impatient surprise he had marked how they had had to hunt for arguments, and to "search for what they should say." With shame and indignation he had seen with what small success they had searched for pleas, how utterly they had failed to give Job any answer worthy of the name, to meet his arguments with counter arguments of superior force (*Verses 11, 12*). He can only account for their failure by supposing that, lest men so wise, and so persuaded of their own wisdom, should grow arrogant in an hour of triumph, and conclude that Wisdom dwelt with them and would die with them, God had doomed them to fail, and reserved the victory to Himself (*Verse 13*). And he is encouraged to speak at last, not only by the fact that he is moved to speak by God, but also because he is conscious that the point to which he has been moved by the inspiration of the Almighty is one which neither Job nor the Friends had touched—that he is about to take up a position which the Friends had failed to occupy, against which therefore Job had marshalled none of his arguments (*Verse 14*). It would almost seem that Elihu had caught a glimpse, a prevision, of St. Paul's canon, that God chooses the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and weak things to put to shame the strong (1 Cor. i. 26-29), in order that no flesh may glory in his presence.

Verses 15-20 are so mere a repetition of *Verses 11-14*, that I am disposed to think Elihu, at this point, turns from the Friends, to whom he had hitherto addressed himself, and, before he commences his address to Job (Chap. xxxiii. 1, *et seq.*), appeals to the audience, the circle of bystanders on the *mezbele*, whose presence and whose interest in the debate we are too apt to forget. The supposition derives some support from, as indeed it was suggested by, the fact that in *Verses 15* and *16* the pronouns are in the third person plural, instead of, as before, in the second. All the Commentators whom I have consulted take this as an instance of "the polite indirection" of address common in Hebrew, which often uses "they" and "them," as a German might, for "ye" or "you." But in other

passages of his discourse (Chap. xxxiv. 2, 4, 7, 10, 16, 34-37) Elihu, as all are agreed, does appeal to the bystanders, the "wise men" and "men of understanding," who were listening to the discussion.¹ May it not be that he also addresses them here? May it not be that he appeals to *them* for the truth of what he has just said, calls on them to confess that the Friends had been utterly discomfited and broken down by the cogency and vehemence of Job's replies, so that words and thoughts alike failed them, and demands whether it is not full time that the discussion were removed to other and higher ground? I am disposed to think that in this hypothesis we have the key to the change in his tone at this point of his exordium, though there is no change in the matter of it.

To whomsoever he speaks, Elihu once more professes his intention to lift the argument to higher ground. He is "full of words" (*Verse* 18)—full of "matter," as our Authorized Version puts it, the Original expression indicating "genuine and irrepressible convictions," which ferment within his breast like wine that has no vent; his breast is burdened and strained by them like wineskins ready to burst (*Verse* 19) insomuch that, though in this case the new wine has been poured into new skins, the new truth into a fresh young heart, he *must* speak that he may get him ease; he is being suffocated by the inward fermentation and struggle of his spirit, and must get *room to breathe*—for that is the real force of his expression—by uttering what is in his heart (*Verse* 20). To be silent would be to be unfaithful to his convictions out of deference to mere authority, from fear of incurring the censure or the suspicions of the grave and reverend men before and around him. He fears the anger of God more than the censure of man, the pain of being untrue more than the shame of rebuke; and therefore he will speak out his new truth in scorn of consequence (*Verses* 21, 22).

No one whose hard yet happy fate it has been to contribute however humbly to the progress of human thought, by confronting accepted dogmas with broader and larger views of

¹ The whole of Chapter xxxiv. is addressed to the audience, though in the Verses I have cited this fact is more apparent, is indeed expressly indicated.

truth; no one who, by the steady pressure of a growing conviction, or of a genuine inspiration from above, has been compelled to put new wine into old skins, and has heard the Church, as well as the world, mutter, "The old is better;" no one who from love to God has been driven to overcome all fear of man, can fail to sympathize with the complex emotions by which the whole being of Elihu was stirred—with his impatience and indignation at seeing the championship of Truth assumed by partial, incompetent, and prejudiced hands; with his fear lest by giving a shock to received opinions he should injure the weak unwary minds which confuse form with substance and dogma with religion, or offend men whom he esteemed and revered, or so damage the cause he had espoused by his immature and unskilful handling of it as to retard its triumph; and with his inexpressible relief when the rubicon was once passed, when his convictions were uttered, and left to the sure arbitrament of Time and of Him who shapes it to a perfect end. Looked at from this sympathetic point of view, Chapter xxxii., which has given such deadly offence to the critics and called down a storm of opprobrium and derision on Elihu's head, will be found to be a graphic and auspicious preface to the discourse in which henceforth he addresses himself to Job. And I am bold to say that, if it be interpreted in this fair and kindly sense, it will be admitted that no charge of immodesty or arrogance can be maintained against it.

In *Chapter xxxiii.* Elihu turns from the Friends and the bystanders, to address himself directly and by name to Job. He bids him

Cease to lament for that he cannot help,
And study help for that which he laments.

Young as he is, and comparatively unwise, he undertakes to prove that God does speak to men, and that in many ways; and he promises Job—

If you can pace your wisdom
In the good path I would have it go,

you shall see that it is not in anger, but in love, that God afflicts the children of men.

He gives him many reasons why he should listen with patient attention. (1) It is no hasty and unconsidered impulse to which Elihu is about to yield, but a long-pondered and profound conviction. "Behold, now, *I open my mouth*" (*Verse 2*), a phrase which always introduces a grave and deliberate utterance, and implies that the speaker is about to employ words selected "with a leavened and prepared choice." *My tongue speaketh within my palate*, each word being, as it were, carefully tasted and approved before it is allowed to slip from the tongue. (2) He is about to speak from an open and honest heart that desires the truth, and (3) with plain sincerity of speech (*Verse 3*). Job had often complained of the oblique and dishonest utterances of the Friends (*e.g.*, Chap. vi. 25); Elihu professes that no dishonesty shall be found in him, that with frank and unfeigned lips he will deliver only that of which his true heart is inwardly and fully persuaded. But (4) the great reason why Job should listen to him while he "shews his conviction" is, that his conviction is not his own, but an inspiration of the Almighty, an inspiration quickened in him by the God whose breath had made him a living soul (*Verse 4*: Comp. Chap. xxxii. 8, and see *Note* on that *Verse*). Conscious that he has received life and understanding from God his Maker, Elihu stands before Job without fear, and challenges him to the logical strife (*Verse 5*), the origin of his boldness saving it from all taint of arrogance. Still another reason is (5) that Elihu is the very antagonist whom Job has again and again demanded. For Job had often complained, "God is not a man, as I am, whom I might answer" (Chap. ix. 32), and prayed that He would lay aside the terrors of his Majesty when He entered into judgment with him (Chap. xiii. 21); and now Elihu replies, "Here am I, a man like yourself, moulded"—or, as the expressive word means, *nipped*—"out of the same clay; and yet, though a man, I will speak for God, for I too am from Him, and it is his spirit which gives me understanding. You need have no dread of *me* such as strikes you dumb before the Majesty of Heaven" (*Verses 6, 7*).

That he *may* be fair, impartial, sincere in his reply, and touch the real issue in dispute, Elihu sums up Job's argument so far as he is about to answer it, and sums it up, so far as brevity will allow, in the very words of his opponent. Verses 9–11 are a model of clear and concise statement, and breathe a candour which many a self-elected champion of the cause of truth would do well to imitate. With a certain incredulous amazement, as of one who could hardly believe his own ears—such is the force of Verse 8—and yet was compelled to believe them, so distinctly and vehemently had Job spoken, Elihu had heard from his lips “a sound of words” which he could only take as meaning a claim of innocence on Job's part and a charge of injustice against God. Now that Job had consistently maintained his integrity no reader of the Poem can doubt. In Chapter xii., Verse 4, he expressly calls himself “just” and “innocent.” In Chapter xvi., Verse 17, he affirms that there was no violence in his hand, and that his prayer was pure. In Chapter x., Verses 13–17, he elaborately contends that God knows his spotless innocence, and yet hunts him down as if he were stained and saturated with an ineradicable guilt. Of all these and many similar passages Elihu gives a fair summary in the words he now attributes to Job: “Pure am I, free from sin; spotless, and there is no iniquity in me. But God seeketh a quarrel with me—*finds alienations* in me, causes and grounds for hostility,” while the other words he attributes to him are simply verbatim citations of words actually used by Job. Thus, “He holdeth me for a foe” in Verse 10 is taken from Chapter xiii. 24, or from Chapter xix. 11; and Verse 11 is taken straight from Chapter xiii. 27. The force of fairness could no farther go; and we cannot be surprised that Job sits silent, and by his silence assents to Elihu's summary as a fair and adequate statement of his argument.

And yet, though Elihu states the argument with such careful and anxious impartiality, *this* is not the argument which he at once proceeds to meet. Its implied charge against the injustice of God and the worthlessness of human virtue he leaves to be discussed in his second and third discourses. And, therefore, having prepared the way for that discussion,

he proceeds to handle a nearer and easier charge. For, throughout his Argument, Job had also implied and asserted God's indifference—that He would not speak to men, would not listen and reply to *him*, and had besought Him to abandon an indifference so cruel, to hear and to speak. Even in his last Monologue Job had complained, "I cry to thee, and thou answerest me not" (Chap. xxx. 20), and sighed in despair. "O that the Almighty *would* hear me!" (Chap. xxxi. 35.)

In all this, replies Elihu, still preserving his accent of surprise, in your whole contention you are unwise and unjust (*Verse 12*), as I will shew you. God is not inequitable. The righteous man is the better for his righteousness. And God does speak to men in divers ways. He is too great to *dispute* with you, indeed, to come at your call, to defend Himself against the vaunts of one who can only vindicate himself by accusing Him. How (*Verse 13*) could you be so unwise as to contend against Him, to affront Him by affirming, that of none of his dealings would He give account? Was *that* the way to make Him speak? And how (*Verse 14*) could you be so unjust? It is not true that He gives no account of Himself and of his dealings with men. He speaks to them in more ways than one.

Two, nay, three (Comp. Verses 14 and 29), of these ways Elihu proceeds to specify.

First, God quickens men to thought and moral emotion in the silence and slumber of the night; deep religious intuitions and yearnings take form in visions (Verses 15–18). Then, should these fail of their proper effect, He chastens and corrects men with pain, leaving them to learn the evil of their doings from the evils they produce (Verses 19–22). And then, if even these should fail, He sends a messenger—man or spirit—to interpret their thoughts and emotions to them, to explain the meaning and purpose of the painful experiences through which they have passed, to convince them that the way of righteousness is the way of life and peace (Verses 23, 24). And all these methods of instruction and correction are sent in love, not in wrath; with a view to teach men their duty, and incline them to do it; to restore their uprightness, and so to bring back light and joy into their life (Verses 25–30).

The first method of Divine Approach is through the Gate of Dreams. No doubt the special reference of *Verse 15* is to such ominous and oracular visions as that which shook the soul of Eliphaz with its revelation of the holiness of God and of the frailty of man (Chap. iv. 12–21), visions which, as we saw when studying that passage, while they resolve the doubts over which men have been brooding, are hardly to be distinguished from the movements of their own unaided consciousness, and are at times simply the products of the conscious spirit when freed, by slumber, from the chains of will and habit and prejudice. By such solemn visitations as these God has in all ages “uncovered the ear” of men otherwise deaf to his instructions, and *sealed*, or stamped, on their minds the special admonition of which they stood in need (*Verse 16*); or—for this *may be* the force of the image—conveyed to them, in this *sealed* and private way, the confidential hint or warning He wished them to receive. But many a lesser man than Eliphaz, many a man to whom no solemn and stately vision has been vouchsafed, has nevertheless discovered, when deep sleep has fallen upon him, in dreams and visions of the night, that

His conscience has a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns him for . . .

a sinner. The pageantry and the pursuing voices of a quickened conscience—acting more fully when slumber has relaxed the will—have often been a sufficient punishment for a crime against the majesty of conscience; and sometimes at least they have sufficed to withdraw men from an evil course on which they had entered, or were about to enter, shattering all the obstinate defences of the pride which disposed them to complete a course of folly and sin simply because they had commenced it (*Verse 17*). “To hide his pride from him” seems to be a peculiar expression for wearying a man of his pride, making him sick of the self-confidence by which he has so often been betrayed. And the Divine purpose in this method of speaking to the soul is most merciful and kindly; for God thus speaks to men, not to affright and punish them simply, but to save

them from the perdition to which, in their arrogance and folly, they are hastening on (*Verse 18*).

Nor is his purpose less kind and merciful when He adopts the second method of approach, when He speaks to men by pain, when He corrects and chastens them through suffering. The very form of the opening phrase of *Verse 19*—“Or he is *chastened* with pain”—hints at the merciful intention expressly declared in *Verse 18* and fully wrought out in Verses 24–30. And it is important that we should notice from the first how Elihu harps on this string, touching it again and again, as if it were familiar to his finger. For his conviction of the scope and function of affliction, and indeed of the final intention of the whole circle of the Divine rule and revelation in all the variety of its forms, differs radically from that of the Friends, who held all suffering to be punitive, and evidently conceived of God as more bent on exacting honour and obedience than on shewing lovingkindness and tender mercy. So far, therefore, from contributing nothing to the argument of the Poem, besides the large and obvious contributions to it already pointed out, Elihu's fundamental assumptions, the very axioms of his theology, are of themselves an immense advance on all we have heretofore met.

In his exposition of the first method of Divine instruction, Elihu probably had Eliphaz in his eye; in expounding the second method it is all but certain that he had Job in his eye. For in describing the man who suffers that he may be strong (*Verses 19–22*), he puts in strokes borrowed from Job's own diagnosis of the symptoms of his loathsome and fatal disease. His ideal sufferer is one who—besides that common sign of sickness, a loathing for wholesome and even for delicate food—“*writheth in great agony* ;” or, as some render it, is chastened “with the constant tumult of his limbs ;” whose “*flesh wasteth out of sight*,” while “*his bones*, once unseen, *stand out to view*,” so that “*his soul draws nigh to the grave*,” and “*his life to the angels of death*,” i.e. to the angels commissioned to slay him unless he repent. No one can well doubt whence these details were drawn who remembers how Job had sighed, “*I waste away* !” “*My limbs are a shadow* !” “*My leanness beareth witness against me* !” “*My bones burn*

with heat !” “ I loathe my life !” “ My breath is spent ! My days are extinct ! For me the tomb !”

But is there no hope even for such a sufferer as this ? O, yes ; for there is no school in which men learn so much, or so fast, as in the school of suffering ; there is no experience by which the soul is so purged and chastened as by the experience of pain and loss. The Divine rebuke is as the ploughing up of the hardened and weed-stained soil that it may bring forth more and better fruit.

O then we bring forth weeds
When our quick minds lie still ; *but our ills told us*
Is as our earing.

And, moreover, God has a third way in which He draws near to men (*Verses 23, 24*). And as he describes this third method of instruction, it may be that Elihu, who has already generalized the experience of Job and of Eliphaz, turns his eye upon himself. For he himself had been moved and taught by God. The deep “conviction” to which he is now giving utterance was, as he more than once insists (*Chap. xxxii. 8 ; Chap. xxxiii. 4*), an “inspiration” from above. And this inspiration, this new interpretation of the facts of human life, probably came to him through one of the thousand “messengers” whom God employs to “shew man what is right” and true. But while he claims a Divine teaching and inspiration for himself, Elihu does not claim to be favoured above his fellows. On the contrary, he expressly argues that a similar teaching is vouchsafed to all who prepare themselves for it by “minding spiritual things.” God has “a thousand” interpreters, or ways of interpreting his will to men. He is for ever sending messengers to us, not only to “tell us of our ills,” but also to explain and enforce the moral intuitions which take form in our “visions,” and in the admonitions of sorrow and loss. These messengers come to all, and come with the same end in view—to shew us what is right, and to pour the light and peace of Heaven on our darkened and distracted hearts.

This seems to be the fair and natural sense of *Verses 23 and 24*.

Even grave and sober Commentators, however, have found in these Verses¹ the whole mystery of Redemption. In the "angel" of *Verse 23* they see "the Angel of the Presence," "the Angel of Jehovah;" and in the "ransom" of *Verse 24* "the Sacrifice of the Cross;" and hence they attribute to Elihu at least some "prevision" of the great "mystery of godliness." Such a method of interpretation is, in my judgment, forced and unnatural. To make Elihu in any degree conversant with the propitiation and mediation of Christ is a mere anachronism, and an anachronism rebuked by the plain and obvious sense of the passage itself and of the meaning and intention of the Chapter in general. The word here rendered "angel" expresses the office or function of the angel, and means "messenger," "interpreter," "ambassador," "teacher," "prophet;" it covers any and all, mortal or immortal, whose duty it is to announce and explain and enforce the will of a superior; and therefore it covers the work and function of the man of genius and the man of science as well as those of the prophet or the evangelist, of the learned divine or faithful expositor of the Word. Any man who can "shew" his fellows "what is right" and fair and good is an "angel" in the sense in which that word is used here. And the phrase, "One out of a thousand," implies how many such ministers God has at his command; for "*thousand*" stands for any vast, indefinite number; and "*one out of a thousand*" is not one who in a thousand has no peer, but one whose fellows are every whit as good as he, any one of the great company of teachers and interpreters being competent for the work.

Equally clear in its bearing on these Verses is the general course of thought. The aim of Elihu is, as we have seen, to shew that God has at least three ways of teaching men the

¹ In these difficult and much disputed Verses I follow Gesenius and Schlottmann in the main, though not without some slight variations. Schlottmann translates the passage thus—

Ist da für ihn der Engel, der Fürsprecher,
 der Ein von den Tausend,
 das er dem Menschen was recht ist vorkünde.
 Und erbarmt sich der und spricht:
 "erlöse ihn, dass er nicht in die Grabe fahre,
 ich fand ein Sühne!"

truths which lead them, through repentance, to life—the way of vision, the way of experience, the way of revelation or of inspiration. If, taught in any or in all these ways, they see “what is right” and embrace it; if, forsaking their sins, they follow after that which is good, then God delivers them from the death which their sins had provoked. *This* seems to be the natural and unforced order of thought in the Chapter; and to read into it the substance of the Gospel and make Elihu conversant with the Sacrifice and Intercession of “the Man from Heaven” is to attribute as much more to him than he deserves, as those critics ascribe less who can see nothing in him but a bombastic braggart or a chattering and conceited coxcomb.

By this various Divine teaching—which in its largest sense may be expressed by the words, Intuition, Experience, Revelation—man, if he profit by it, is made a new creature; he is restored to health both of body and of soul (*Verses* 25, 26); his youth is renewed; he becomes “as a little child;” and, like a child, he speaks with God as with a Father, looking up into his face with “cries of joy,” because He has “restored his uprightness” to him, *i.e.* made him really upright and pure.

Verses 27 and 28 give us the pathetic song of the restored and grateful Penitent. In the word “chant” (*Verse* 27) there is doubtless an allusion to the raised and measured tone of Oriental worship. The Mussulmans recite their *suras* and the Hindoos their *shastras* in a chant; and thus in India the verbs “sing” and “read” are, in the common parlance, interchangeable: a native, for instance, will often say of a bird that “it *reads* finely.”¹ So that we are to conceive of the penitent as coming before the Lord to make a public confession both of his sin and of the mercy which is “more than all our sins.” *Verses* 29 and 30 do but throw the experience of the individual penitent into a general form (hence the repetition of *Verse* 28 in *Verse* 30), and assure us that it is no particular and special instance of the gracious discipline of Heaven merely to which Elihu has drawn our thoughts, but God’s

¹ See Heber’s *India*, vol. i., p. 133.

common method with man, the aim and intention of his discipline for us all.

Thus, as I have already pointed out, Elihu does not simply meet Job's contention that God does not and will not speak to men even when they most need and desire to hear his voice ; he also meets Job's feeling that it is cruel and unjust to afflict men who have not provoked punishment by conscious and specific sins. Like the Friends, Job was unable to see that suffering had any but a punitive errand, and could only conclude that, since he was so heavily afflicted, it was God's intention to punish and even to destroy him. No, replies Elihu ; affliction is sent for teaching and discipline as well as for punishment, in mercy as well as in wrath. And since you have not been guilty of the specific sins of which your sufferings would have been the natural and inevitable results, the end for which you have been afflicted *must* be your instruction and discipline in righteousness. God's aim is not to bring you down to death, but to bring you back from death, that you may live and behold the light.

And as we listen to this " wise young man " we are at first disposed to say, These were the very truths Job needed and longed to hear. And yet, were they ? Though Elihu tacitly admits Job to be innocent of the gross and patent transgressions " running before to judgment," with which he had been charged by the Friends, does he not at the same time assume that Job had unconsciously committed sins of a more inward and secret kind, and that there was in him a latent sinfulness of nature for or from which God was chastening him ? Is it not clearly his leading aim to convince Job of sin, if not of sins, to induce contrition, to persuade him to take up the song of the penitent, and confess, "*I have sinned, and perverted that which was right*" ?

No doubt Job felt, as we feel, the immense difference in the tone taken by Elihu and that which the Friends had taken—felt how much more just, temperate, and kindly it was, felt that in response to such an invitation as this he would very gladly confess his sins, if only he had any specific sins to confess. But may he not also have felt that, in

assuming his sins, or even his sinfulness, Elihu was doing him some injustice, and seeking to wrest from him that consciousness of integrity which he had resolved to hold fast so long as he lived?

That he *was* touched and torn by some such conflicting emotions as these seems implied in the closing paragraph of the Chapter (*Verses 31-33*). For in these Verses, as the Commentators generally agree, the effect of Elihu's discourse on Job is indirectly portrayed. He may have stirred, or lifted a hand, or opened his lips, as if about to reply to the argument of Elihu, as if to demand proof of the sins which he was summoned to repent and confess, or to deny that in his case suffering had been a school of righteousness. But feeling that "this earlier Daniel come to judgment" had really imported a new element into the discussion, and touched with his tender and sympathetic tone, as also with his frank and obvious desire to repel the charges of the Friends, and to "find him innocent," he may have checked himself, and pressed back the rising words, resolute to hear him to the end. This at least appears to be the implication of the challenge, and of the pauses of Elihu in the last three Verses of the Chapter, and of the unbroken silence of Job.

The most important contribution to the argument of the Poem made in Elihu's First Discourse are the two on which already so much stress has been laid. (1) That suffering is intended by God as a quickening and loving discipline in righteousness, rather than as an angry and vindictive punishment; that though "adversity be like the period of the former and latter rain—cold, comfortless, and unfriendly to man—yet from that season have their birth the flower and the fruit, the date, the rose, and the pomegranate." And (2) that by the great primitive religious intuitions, which all men share, revealed and expressed in visions, by their common training in the school of suffering, and by the due interpretation of this experience and these intuitions, conveyed through the wisdom of the wise or the inspiration of God, every man receives a sufficient disclosure of the Divine love to bring him to repentance and to "the light of life." And if Elihu had not added another word, if we owed him nothing but this striking,

complete, and wonderfully philosophic definition of the common and constant modes in which God reveals to men the eternal counsels of his will, we should be compelled to confess that he makes a very real and valuable contribution to the argument of the Poem, a contribution as real and valuable to-day as on the day it left his lips.

SECOND DISCOURSE.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Elihu has already addressed himself directly to the Friends (Chap. xxxii.), and to Job (Chap. xxxiii.); he had accused *them* of condemning a man whom they could not refute, and *him* of charging with silence and indifference the God who speaks to men in many ways. And now he turns and addresses himself to the bystanders, who had eagerly followed every wind and double of this great inquest and argument. Apt as we are to forget them, he renders it quite impossible for us to forget them throughout this second discourse. He appeals to them again and again (Verses 2, 10, 16, 34), and always with the profoundest respect, as "sages" and "wise men," "men of *heart*" and "men of *experience*." And if in these terms of respect there be some touch of that tone of compliment by which an orator seeks to propitiate his audience, we yet have no reason to suspect Elihu's sincerity. For, doubtless, there were in his audience many aged and experienced men for whom he would feel a natural deference; even compliments may be sincere; a deferential tone is natural and becoming, especially in a young man, in addressing a public audience: and, at the lowest, Elihu, with many another orator, might well plead on behalf of the respectful epithets he lavishes on his hearers, "I do but

bring a trumpet to awake their ears,
To set their sense on the attentive bent,
And then to speak."

Nor, if we consider his theme, is it without good reason

that, at this point, he should turn from Job and the Friends to appeal to a larger audience. For his theme, the equity of the Divine Providence, was the standing problem of the ancient world, as indeed with many it is a standing and unsolved problem, an open and much-debated question, to this day. Every man on the *mezbele* was as profoundly interested in it as Job himself, though less vividly conscious of his interest; and one can almost feel the thrill of quickened and eager attention with which they would listen to Elihu, as this "wise young man" uttered appeal after appeal, and produced argument after argument to prove that the sorrowful and chequered lot of man is ordered by an unfailing Justice and Love.

Job had impugned that Justice (Verses 5-9). Elihu asserts it (Verses 10, 11), and adduces arguments for it of the most philosophic reach. (α) He argues (Verses 12-15) that God *cannot* be inequitable, since it was of his own will that He made the universe, since it is by his quickening breath that all creatures are sustained in being; the government of the world is not an unwelcome duty, a laborious task, imposed upon Him from without; it is freely assumed, freely borne, freely discharged; so that He has no possible motive for heedlessness or injustice. (β) He argues (Verses 16-19) that He who rules the world age after age *must* be just, since injustice is sooner or later fatal to authority; and, had He been unjust, the King of the Universe would long since have been dethroned. And (γ) he argues (Verses 20-30) that in point of fact God *is* just; that history itself, if only taken on the large scale, proves Him to be the foe of all injustice, proves that, though He may suffer fraud and wrong to sit in high places for a time, yet when the due moment comes He crushes them in a moment, striking them down to ruin with an unseen hand indeed, yet "in the eyes of all beholders." Having stated his theme and adduced his arguments, Elihu draws his conclusion (Verses 31-37); his conclusion is that humility and penitence become the man who, under a rule so just, is afflicted and brought low; that, instead of asserting his own righteousness, or questioning the righteousness of the great Ruler of men, he should confess his sin, steadfastly

purpose amendment, and ask for a clearer insight into the ways of God. And in this conclusion he is sure that all "wise persons" will agree.

Thus Elihu brings his argument home to *Job*, whom he has not forgotten while appealing to the bystanders, whose attention to this argument he had earnestly challenged (Chap. xxxiii. 31-33) even before he appealed to them.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

1. *And Elihu took up his discourse and said :*
2. *Hear my words, O ye sages,*
 And give ear to me, ye men of knowledge,
3. *For the ear testeth words,*
 As the palate testeth food !
4. *Let us prove what is right,*
 Let us learn of one another what is good :
5. *For Job hath said, " I am righteous,*
 But God hath taken away my right ;
6. *Though my cause be just, I pass for a liar ;*
 Grievous is my arrow, though I am without sin."
7. *Who is a man like Job,*
 That drinketh down scoffing like water,
8. *And goeth over to the evil doers,*
 And walketh with men of wickedness ?
9. *For he said, " It profiteth a man nothing*
 That he should delight himself in God."
10. *Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding :—*
 Far be iniquity from God,
 And injustice from the Almighty !
11. *He requiteth every man according to his deed,*
 And according to his work He recompenseth him.
12. *Yea, of a truth, God cannot be inequitable,*
 Nor can the Almighty wrest justice.
13. *Who hath given Him the earth in charge,*
 Or who hath laid the universe upon Him ?
14. *Were He intent on Himself alone,*
 He would gather to Himself his spirit and his breath ;
15. *All flesh would expire together,*
 And man would return to dust.
16. *Now hear this, if ye have understanding,*
 Give ear to the voice of my words :
17. *Can he that hateth justice rule ?*

- And wilt thou condemn the Just, the Mighty One ?*
18. *Is it to be said to a king, " O worthless man ! "*
And to princes, " O ye wicked ! "
19. *How much less to Him who accepteth not the person of nobles,*
Nor regardeth the rich more than the poor,
Since they are all the work of his hands ?
20. *In a moment they die ;*
Even at midnight the people are overthrown and perish ;
The mighty are taken off by an unseen hand :
21. *For his eyes are on the ways of man,*
And He beholdeth all his steps ;
22. *There is no darkness nor blackness of death*
Wher in they that do evil can hide themselves ;
23. *For God need not look at a man twice*
When He would bring him into judgment.
24. *He breaketh in pieces mighty men without inquisition,*
And setteth up others in their stead,
25. *For He knoweth well their deeds :*
He overthroweth them in the night and they are crushed ;
26. *Because they are wicked, He striketh them*
In the open sight of all,
27. *Because they turned away from after Him,*
And considered none of his ways,
28. *So that they caused the cry of the poor to go up before Him :*
For He heareth the cry of the afflicted.
29. *When He giveth peace, who can condemn Him ?*
But who can behold Him when He hideth his face,
Whether from a nation or only from a man,
30. *Because the wicked reign*
And the people are ensnared ?
31. *Surely it is meet to say unto God,*
" I have borne ; I will not offend again :
32. *That which I see not shew Thou me,*
That if I have done wrong, I may do it no more."
33. *Shall He requite thee as thou deemest right,*
As you reject, as you choose, but not He ?
Say what thou knowest.
34. *Men of understanding will say to me,*
And wise persons who hear me,
35. *" Job hath spoken without knowledge,*
And his words are devoid of wisdom."
36. *Would that Job might be proved to the uttermost,*
For his answers are like those of the wicked :

37.

*For he addeth mutiny to his sin,
He clappeth his hands among us,
And multiplieth his words against God.*

Elihu commences his address to the wise and experienced men around him by appealing to that moral sense in man which discriminates between word and word, argument and argument, action and action, and pronounces on their ethical value—a sense in which they, no less than he, as entirely believed as in the physical sense which tastes and discriminates between food and food, flavour and flavour. The figure or proverb in which he couches this appeal (*Verse 3*) had been used by Job himself (Chap. xii. 11), and had influenced the form of many Verses in the Poem (*e.g.*, Chap. vi. 6, 7; and Chap. xxxiii. 2). The figure indeed rests on one of those obvious and inevitable analogies which have entered into the literature of every race. Thus, for example, Shakespeare makes the wise Nestor say to the crafty Ulysses:

Now I begin to *relish* thy advice,
And I will give a *taste* of it forthwith
To Agamemnon;

and more than once the same Poet teaches us that as “by our ears our hearts oft *tainted* be,” so through our ears there often reaches our hearts that salt of wisdom by which the taint is cured. As they listen to him Elihu would have his hearers exercise their moral sense, testing and proving his words that they may admit only those which are true, and unite with him in the quest of that which is good (*Verse 4*).

In *Verses 5 and 6* he states, or restates (Comp. Chap. xxxiii. 9-11), the assertion of Job to which he is about to reply, and states it with his usual fairness. In so many words Job had affirmed as against God, “I know that *I have right on my side*” (Chap. xiii. 18); he had maintained that he had “kept” the way of righteousness and had not “turned aside” from that way (Chap. xxiii. 11, 12), but that nevertheless God had embittered his soul by denying him the simplest justice and treating him as one of the wicked (Chap. xxvii. 2). By disregarding his asseveration of personal and undeviating righteousness God had caused him to “pass for a liar” even

with those who knew him best—and, indeed, the Friends had been only too forward to give him both the lie oblique and the lie direct. The very image of Verse 6—"Grievous is my arrow"—is taken from the mouth of Job: "Lo, *the arrows* of the Almighty are in me, and their *venom* drinketh up my spirit" (Chap. vi. 4), and is plainly a milder version of Job's complaint, since it passes by the wild passionate charge that God had dipped his arrows in poison before they left his bow. Throughout his whole Discourse indeed, as here, Elihu shews a conspicuous moderation and good sense, at the farthest remove from the bitter injustice of the Friends—a point which surely must have been overlooked by the critics who are so hard on him: he is the fairest and most just-minded of controversialists; instead of evading the main argument of his antagonist to pounce with delight on his occasional slips and exaggerations, and tearing them to tatters with an air of triumph when no real victory has been won, he declines to press any such accident of debate, deals only with what is essential, and bends his assault only on those main positions which Job was prepared to defend.

It was natural, therefore, that, with all his reverence for Job, he should be offended by the heat and passion of his words, by the absence of moderation and self-restraint, and tell him that "this strained passion did him wrong." No doubt it is easier for his friend on the bank to maintain his composure than it is for the man who has been swept away by the stream of calamity, and is doing instant battle with its fierce currents and driving waves. Job is not to be overmuch blamed if, under the stress of calamity and stung by the baseless calumnies of the Friends, he now and then lost composure, and grew immoderate both in his resentments and his retorts. Remembering the keen and protracted agony he had to endure, we may well pardon an offence for which it is so easy to account; we may cheerfully admit, as Jehovah Himself admitted, that in the main he spoke of God aright; we may even admire the constancy and patience with which on the whole he met the provocations and insults of the Friends: and yet we cannot but feel that he often pushed his inferences against the Divine Justice and Providence much too far, as

indeed he himself confessed that he had when at last he saw Jehovah face to face, and carried his just resentment against the Friends to excess. There are points in the progress of the story where, as we have seen, he seems to *revel* in his sense of wrong, and to lash out wildly against both God and man. With fine moral tact Elihu had detected this fault in his tone and bearing, and had discovered whither it was leading him. Hence he cries (*Verses 7 and 8*): "Where in the world is there a man like Job, *who drinks down scorn like water*, and, by meeting scorn with deeper scorn, by nursing his resentment, by fanning it to a white heat, is going over to the ranks of them that do evil, and associating himself with wicked men?"¹

In proof that, in his fierce passionate resentment of his wrongs, Job was taking the tone and adopting the principles characteristic of the ungodly, and even advancing the sceptical arguments against the Divine Government of the world by which they often sought to justify their impiety and immorality, Elihu charges him (*Verse 9*) with having contended that "it profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself in God," that the righteous man has no advantage over the unrighteous. And though Job nowhere uses these very words, he often uses words in which this charge is implied, and even words which state it much more harshly and crudely. What else does he mean by his constant affirmation that, although he is innocent, he is treated as if he were guilty; that, though he is "without transgression," even harder measure is meted out to him than to habitual and notorious transgressors of the Divine law? In Chapter xxi. he formally argues that the wicked live on, wax old, and become mighty in power, in houses "free from fear" and abounding in wealth and happiness; that, after "wearing away their days in mirth," they are blessed with a sudden and painless death, although they say:

What is the Almighty that we should serve Him,
And *what will it profit us* if we make our suit unto Him?

¹ In this paraphrase I have been able, I hope, to give the real sense of Verses 7 and 8 more exactly than it is possible to give it in any mere translation.

While in Chapter ix., Verses 22 and 23, he brings the express charge against God which Elihu attributes to him in a form much more offensive than that which Elihu puts into his mouth :

It is all one, therefore will I say it ;
The guiltless and the guilty He destroyeth alike ;
 When the scourge slayeth suddenly,
He laughs at the temptation of the innocent.

There is, as we saw in studying these and kindred passages, much to excuse, much to account for, much even, when once we remember that Job is *conducting an argument*, to vindicate his use of such language as this : and yet who does not perceive, with Elihu, that in using it Job was perilously near to "walking in the counsel of the ungodly, and standing in the way of sinners, and sitting in the seat of the scornful" ?

To Elihu such a conclusion as that to which Job seemed at least to have been tending was intolerable, absurd in reason, and immoral in its practical influence. And hence, in *Verses 10 and 11*, he meets it point blank, stating as the thesis or proposition he was prepared to maintain against all comers, that God is *not* indifferent to the moral complexion of human conduct, that He is of an exact and invariable justice ; and that, because He is just, He requites every man according to his deeds—a law the universal incidence of which Job had questioned again and again : and from his thesis, if only he can prove it, Elihu would have us infer that, so far from profiting nothing, a man is and must be the better for his piety, that it must and does profit a man much that he should delight himself in the Almighty.

He opens his statement by a fresh appeal to the sages—the "*men of understanding*" and the "*men of heart*"—whom he saw around him, *i.e.*, men who had long brooded in their hearts over the mysteries of the Divine Providence, as these had been brought home to them by experience and observation, men who had "a feeling sense" of those sacred and often insoluble mysteries. Then, his whole moral nature revolting from the conclusion of evil-doers, which Job had adopted or seemed to adopt, he breaks into a formula of indignant deprecation, as

one to whom the bare thought of any stain on the fair and sacred Name of God was altogether intolerable :

Far be iniquity from God,
And injustice from the Almighty !

And, finally, having first stated his theme in the emotional manner of the East, he states it in the more simple and direct form with which we of the West are familiar :

He requiteth every man according to his deed,
And according to his work He recompenseth him.

Now this law of exact and universal retribution—of which we have already heard so much from the Friends—has always been held by men of experience and faith to be the ruling law of the Divine Providence ; and even those who do not admit that it *is*, at least admit that it *should* be so. It rests on a natural instinct and craving ; for who is not ready to demand ?—

Let sin, alone committed, light alone
Upon his head that hath transgressed so ;
Let guiltless souls be freed from guilty woe.

The Friends held that this *was* the law, and by their pungent, personal, and mistaken applications of it had wellnigh driven Job to despair. Job held that it *ought to be* the law, but questioned and doubted whether it was. Elihu, first giving a wider scope to the law, is about to contend, against Job, that what ought to be *must be* and *is*. And even the most advanced thinkers of modern times, when they too have given the law a still larger interpretation and wider scope than Elihu's, maintain with him that Retribution is the true key to the Providence which shapes men's ends for them, or, if they do not recognize a Divine Providence, that it is the true and scientific key to the life of man upon the earth. To us, therefore, the arguments by which Elihu sustains his proposition can hardly fail to be as interesting as they were to the "men of understanding" to whom they were originally addressed.

In his first argument (Verses 12–15) he takes the high *a priori* road, and contends, philosophically enough, that God *cannot* be inequitable, because he has no reason, no conceivable

motive, for inequity. It is not as if the government of the world had been imposed upon Him from without, a task reluctantly undertaken, which, therefore, He might be disposed to neglect; nor is it as if He had been entrusted with it for a time by some superior Power, and might, therefore, be tempted, like some greedy satrap, to "wrest justice," in order to enrich Himself at the expense of his subjects (*Verse 13*). On the contrary, it was of his own will that He made the earth and called men into being. It can only be because He loves them that He either created or sustains them. Were He intent on Himself alone, impelled by any selfish or self-regarding motive, impelled by aught save an unselfish and everlasting love, He would recall the quickening and sustaining emanations of his Divine energy; and, withdrawing from us both the breath of our nostrils and that spiritual influence which is to the soul what the breath is to the body, He would suffer all flesh to "expire together," and the whole frame of man to crumble into dust (*Verses 14, 15*). As it is and can be no self-regarding affection, no desire for self-aggrandizement, which induces Him to vivify us by a constant impartation of his "spirit" and to uphold us in being by a constant exertion of his power, what possible motive can He have for perverting justice and for treating us inequitably?

And, indeed, if we believe in a Creator at all, and especially in a Creator whose power is the servant of his love, I do not see how we are to answer that question, how we are to evade the force of Elihu's first argument; for surely He who made and sustains us of his own will, at the mere prompting of love, is not likely to act unjustly by us.

But Elihu has another argument to urge in support of his thesis (*Verses 16-19*), and an argument of the same philosophical character as the first. Like St. Paul (*Romans iii. 6*), he contends that He who rules the world cannot be unjust, since injustice undermines authority, and eventually overthrows it. Opening with a new appeal to the wise and experienced men in the circle of bystanders (*Verse 16*), he affirms that there would be a kind of treason in charging even earthly kings and princes with injustice, since that would be to deny them the very quality most essential to their high

difficult function; and to deny them the quality without which they were unfit to reign would be virtually to depose them (*Verse 18*). But if it be a kind of treason to accuse *them* of injustice, what must it be to launch the self-same accusation against Him by whom alone kings reign and princes decree justice? If no man who "hates justice" has any right to rule, or any ability for rule, how much more incredible and impossible is it that the Omnipotent should be unjust, or that He in whom power and justice must be one should wrest the cause of those who come before Him (*Verse 17*)? And, again (*Verse 19*), what motive can He have for injustice who made both the noble and the beggar, both rich and poor, to whom, therefore, all are equally dear? If all men are "the work of his hands," and all they have be his gift, why should He prefer one before another, and so prefer the one as to wrong the other, thus putting his very throne in jeopardy by bringing a stain upon his justice?

Granting Elihu's premiss, granting that God is omnipotent, it is impossible to disprove his conclusion, that God is and must be just. And hence it is that in our own day those who question the justice of God also question his might, and infer that the action of his pure and benevolent Will is checked and thwarted by some dark Power equal, if not superior, to his own.

But Elihu is not content with mere logic and philosophic inference; he appeals to facts. Having shewn *what must be*, he passes on to *what is*. He appeals to history (*Verses 20-30*) in support of his philosophy, and contends with Milton that

All is best
And ever found best *at the close*.

For a time injustice may thrive, or seem to thrive; the wicked may be in great power and swell like a green bay tree; but from the first the axe is laid at the root of every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, and sooner or later the axe is lifted and the tree falls. The Divine Ruler of the world may suffer tyrannic authority to play its "fantastic tricks" unrebuked for a while; and that base multitude which is ever ready to acclaim high-handed assertions of power that seem to

subserve national or “imperial” interests, fooled by impunity, may lose all sense of moral distinctions; but, when the cup of their iniquity is full, rich and poor, mighty and feeble, despotic princes and their base subservient flatterers and accomplices, are overthrown and perish as in a moment: in the culminating hour of darkness the dawn of a new day strikes upward into the sky; and the mighty who, by their injustice, have grown intolerable to God and man, are “taken off” the swelling stage “*without hand*,” as it were, that is, by a hand not visible to them, by a force the very existence of which they have not foreboded or have not respected (*Verse 20*). This “unseen hand” may stand for the resentment of the honest and the just who, patient of wrong up to a certain point, suddenly and unexpectedly rise up against it when it passes all bounds of endurance; or it may point to the dark and sudden conspiracies, the palace intrigues, by which, especially in the East, those who stand round the throne execute a wild justice on the tyrant who has outraged all justice: or, as is more likely from the whole tone of the passage, it may indicate the immediate hand, the instant judgment, of an offended God. What Elihu means is, most probably, that “in the middle of the night,” when the darkness is at the deepest and injustice is becoming the law, those who have darkened the lives of so many of their fellows are removed—like Pharaoh, like Herod—by the invisible and immediate stroke of Divine Justice, “the people” who approved of them, or even tolerated them, often sharing their doom or suffering from their fall.

For from the following Verses it is very evident that at this point he has *God* in his thoughts. Human judges may be unjust even when most intent on justice; they cannot know all the ways of man or trace “*all his steps*,” and if they could acquaint themselves with all his deeds, they could not penetrate to the motives which inspired them and gave them their ethical colour and significance. Impartial verdicts are not likely to proceed from partial knowledge. But the knowledge of the Supreme Ruler of men is not partial; He is omniscient, and his omniscience is a new argument and guarantee of his impartiality. His eyes are ever on the ways of men; He beholds all their steps (*Verse 21*). Nothing can

escape his gaze ; no dark shadow, no plausible subterfuge, can hide from Him the offender's guilt (*Verse 22*). Knowing men altogether, familiar with their motives as well as their deeds, with the whole complexion of their nature and life as well as with the separate actions for which they may be called to account, there is no need for Him to hold such a judicial investigation as Job had again and again demanded (*Of Chap. xxiv. 1, et seq.*), no need even for Him "*to look at a man twice,*" before pronouncing sentence or executing judgment (*Verse 23*). Without an inquisition, therefore (*Verse 24*), which would add nothing to his knowledge, the Allseeing Judge hurls the unjust, however mighty, from their pride of place, and sets up "*others,*" *i.e.* more worthy and equitable rulers, in their stead—all the rebellions, revolutions, and reformations of the various races of the world being ruled and determined by God in so far as they spring from a just resentment of injustice and vice. He who knows these unjust rulers altogether, whatever the darkness in which they strive to hide themselves, if at times He smites them in the guarded seclusion in which they have entrenched themselves against the victims of their despotic humours, snatching them thence or crushing them in it as with an unseen hand (*Verse 25* ; comp. *Verse 20*), at other times strikes them "*in the open sight of all*"—" *in the place of the spectators,*" the public haunt where men most congregate ; *i.e.*, they are openly punished for their secret sins by Him who seeth in secret, punished by the manifest judgment of Heaven, by the immediate "*visitation of God*" (*Verse 26*).

That he may still further impress his hearers, the spectators of the tragedy of which the *mezbele* was the open and exposed stage, with a sense of the Divine Justice, and of the Love that lies at the very heart of that Justice, Elihu proceeds to emphasize the fact he has already affirmed, that the judgments of God are based on purely moral distinctions, and are intended to uphold the moral sanctions of a law which must be enforced if the broad realm over which He rules is to be happy and at peace. It is because men, and especially men dressed in a little brief authority, are wicked (*Verse 26*), because they are lawless and godless (*Verse 27*), that He

strikes them down in the presence of those whom they have wronged and corrupted and oppressed. Little as they meant to set such a cause in motion, it is their fraud and injustice and cruelty which have compelled God to intervene, since it is these which have "caused the cry" of the poor sufferers by them to go up before One who never turns a deaf or indifferent ear to their cry (*Verse 28*: comp. Exodus ii. 23, 24; and James v. 4). As it is his consideration; his compassion, for the poor and the afflicted which moves Him to give them peace by "crushing" the tyrants who troubled their peace, who can condemn Him as though He were unjust? And if He hide his face from men in displeasure at their crimes and sins, who can "behold" Him? who, that is, can penetrate the veil with which He has covered his face and turn his displeasure into favour? Whether his judgment fall only on the tyrant who has provoked it by his sins against the public welfare, or also embrace in its wide dark folds the guilty nation which by its sympathy or easy toleration has become a partaker in his sins, is it not just that He should bring the triumph of the wicked to an end, and not suffer men to be netted and ensnared, as they are only too apt to be, by the spectacle of wickedness triumphing in high places (*Verses 29, 30*)?

What were the special historical catastrophes that Elihu had in his mind, and on which he based his induction of the justice of the Divine Rule, we do not know; but every age abounds in them, and it is quite obvious that they were as familiar and as impressive to Job himself¹ as they were to Elihu: to both they were the most striking and weighty proofs of the equitable and kindly Providence which shapes men's lives and ends for them, misshew them how they will. And we need not pause to quote instances before admiring the firm grasp of ethical principles displayed by this wise Young Man. He saw clearly what all the added history of thirty or forty centuries, so rich in examples of the Justice that rules the world, has not even yet taught some among us, that the moral principles by which we acknowledge we are bound to govern our individual lives apply no less to the

¹ See Chap. xxiv. 2-25; and Chap. xxvii. 13-23.

lives and actions of nations ; that the same laws, enforced by the same awful sanctions, hold in both, and ultimately govern both ; that lies, however diplomatic, frauds on however large a scale, and a tyrannous use of superior strength, are as contemptible, and in the end as fatal, in a nation as in a man. And he had also learned, what some of us are still slow to see, that the goal and end of all Divine judgments is mercy ; that God strikes down the lawless oppressor, whether of the family or of the nation, from love to the oppressed, and brings successful evil to a sudden end out of compassion for the unthinking multitude who might be dazzled and corrupted by it were its triumph to endure.

Having advanced these able and cogent arguments for the justice of the Lord and Governor of the world, Elihu goes on to infer his conclusion from them and to point the moral of them (Verses 31-37). He had already prepared the way for his application by the phrase (*Verse 29*), "Whether he hideth his face from a nation or only *from a man* ;" for obviously the "man" he had in his eye was none other than Job. To Job, therefore, he now applies the argument he has conducted to a close. There may be another link of connection between this hortatory conclusion and the Verses which immediately precede it. Possibly, as some Commentators hold, Elihu meant to imply a hint that even the haughty and lawless tyrants, who had provoked the judgments of God by their egregious and multiplied crimes, would not have sought his face in vain had they sought it in the way of penitence and amendment. But though these subtle and delicate links of connection lend an added charm to the Poem, we do not need to trace them out in order to vindicate the conclusion he draws from his great argument. For if, as he has argued, God's rule of man is characterized by an invariable justice, and even this justice is but a form of his love, what else is there for any sufferer to do but to humble himself under the mighty but tender Hand that has been laid upon him, to infer that at the best he has been guilty of sins of ignorance, to brace himself to bear with patience the inevitable results of his sins, and to seek a wider knowledge of the Law by which his life is governed ? This is the only course open to him,

and becoming to him; for how can a man reasonably rebel against the decrees of Justice and Love? And this is the course, so Elihu implies, which *Job* ought to have taken instead of flaming out into impeachments of the Divine equity and kindness.

In the hope that he may still take this course, Elihu offers him (*Verses 31, 32*) a model confession, shews him how the true penitent draws near to the Heavenly Majesty, and leaves him to compare with this “meet” saying his own passionate invectives and self-justifying appeals. Through the heavy pauses and broken constructions of this Confession we are intended, I suppose, to hear the sobs and groans of the Penitent, who, since he cannot and will not impugn the justice of God, can only infer that, consciously or unconsciously, he has transgressed the Divine order, broken the Divine law. Such a one can appeal to the Great Searcher of hearts, who knows his inward thoughts and motives as well as all his deeds, and say: “*I have borne*,” *i.e.*, though, his breath failing him for sorrow and his voice lost in the sighings of his contrition, he does not tell us what he has endured—“*I both have borne and will bear my chastisement as patiently as I can, since it comes to correct my offence*”: “*I will not offend*,” *i.e.*, though he does not or cannot complete his phrase, “*I will not offend any more*,” and, lest he should once more and unwittingly offend, “*That which I see not, teach Thou me, that, if I have done wrong, I may do it no more*.” In the main this patient endurance of chastening, this resolve to amend, and this craving for a larger and clearer knowledge of the law that has to be kept under such stern penalties, are the very stuff and substance of all true repentance, and we may very well accept Elihu’s form—as he evidently intended us to accept it—as a model confession. At the same time, the conditional phrase, “*if I have done wrong*,” shews clearly enough that Elihu had *Job* in his mind, and modified his model so as to adapt it to the peculiarities, or supposed peculiarities, of the case before him. *Job* had contended that he had not wittingly or wilfully transgressed the Divine law. “*Not wittingly, perhaps*,” suggests Elihu, “*nor wilfully*; but may you not unconsciously, and without intention, have transgressed a law which must

hold on its course and exact its penalties of all who transgress it, however innocent of evil intention they may be? Nay, *must* you not, if, as I have shewn, God be just?" The whole implication of the passage is that there may be sins of ignorance as well as sins of intention—unintended transgressions which entail suffering even though they do not involve guilt; and that it is for the good of the world at large that even these transgressions should receive their due recompense.

Thus he reconciles the integrity of Job with the justice of God, or at least hints at a possible reconciliation, and shews Job how, even on his own hypothesis, instead of charging the Ruler of the world with injustice, he should draw near to Him in penitence and supplication.

Innocent of any sins, or of any conscious sins, which demanded the special judgments that had fallen on him, Job might be: nevertheless, he was not without sin. For (*Verse 33*) he had dared to judge, and even to condemn, the Judge of all; and who could do that without guilt? He had quarrelled with the Divine order of the world, and preferred to it another order of his own invention and choice. *Was he to impose his law and order on God, or God to impose his on him?*

Such I take to be the meaning of this very difficult Verse; but some critics worthy of all respect take it to mean that, if Job is not content with the Divine order, it is *for him* to decide whether or not he will still adhere to his own conception of what ought to be, *not for Elihu*, since he, Elihu, is quite content with what is, and has no desire to see the existing order changed. This interpretation rests on the fact that the final words of the Verse, which I have rendered, "but not *He*," mean, literally, "and not *I*." But I would submit that we have here only that emphatic Hebrew idiom of which many instances are to be found in the Old Testament—*e.g.*, Ecclesiastes ii. 25, and iv. 8—the speaker projecting himself for a moment into the place of God and speaking thence. Both the logic and tone of the passage, I think, make the rendering I have preferred the more natural one.

But however that may be, and whatever Job may think, whatever decision he may arrive at, Elihu will be glad to hear it; and hence he turns upon Job with the demand, "Say,

“speak out, what thou knowest,” not without some hope probably that Job may avail himself of the loophole of escape which he has provided for him in Verse 32, and adopt a Confession which does not necessarily impeach the integrity which he was so resolute to maintain; nor without hope that Job may see the absurdity of demanding that the King of the universe should take a law from the mouth of his subject. Even to this appeal, however, Job remains dumb, much, I suspect, to Elihu's grief and disappointment. But though Job will make no concession, Elihu is quite sure—perhaps he saw assent to his argument and conclusion in their faces and bearing—that the wise and experienced onlookers, to whom he now reverts, will admit that, in charging the Ruler of the world with injustice, Job had sinned against his own better knowledge and had failed to shew his usual wisdom (*Verses 34, 35*). And since even yet Job will not confess and abandon his sin, Elihu has no alternative but to hope that he may still be probed and proved, “proved to the uttermost,” until by the severities of his probation he has been purged from the folly which had led him to speak “like the wicked” (*Verse 36*; comp. *Verses 7-9*). His original offence was aggravated by his obstinate adherence to it, by his refusal to take the attitude and utter the confession of the Penitent (*Verse 37*). By cherishing a self-justifying and impenitent spirit he was adding “mutiny,” or rebellion, to his “sin,” wilful to unconscious guilt—adding *pesha* to *chattath*. “All sorts of sins, acts of weakness, negligence, or carelessness, are implied in the primary expression *chattath*; but sins of design and violent purpose are specially implied by *pesha*.”

There may be some touch of wounded self-love, as well as of disappointment, in the charge with which Elihu concludes his second Discourse. Undoubtedly it was hard on him that an argument so able and cogent, so philosophical in tone, and closing with an induction from historical facts which he may well have thought Job would feel to be irresistible, should have failed to produce conviction or any sign of assent. And yet, though our sympathies go with Job more than with Elihu, who can deny that, at bottom, and bating some unnecessary heat of tone, the charge was true? Not Job himself, we may

be sure. For when Jehovah repeats Elihu's charge (Comp. Chap. xxxiv. 35 with Chap. xlii. 3), Job humbly confesses that he *had* "spoken without knowledge," retracts all the accusations against the Divine Justice in which he had associated himself with the wicked; and not only repents with the gentle and hopeful contrition which Elihu had advised, but "abhors himself" for his guilt, and repents "in dust and ashes"—as impassioned and vehement in his very penitence before God as he had been in "multiplying words against God."

THIRD DISCOURSE.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Job had sustained his charge of injustice against the almighty Lord and Ruler of men by contending that, under his rule, the righteous were none the better for their righteousness (See Chapter xxxiv. 9, with Note on it). It is to this subsidiary charge that Elihu here addresses himself in an argument as wide in its sweep, as cogent, as philosophical in its tone, as any we have already heard from him, though it is more faintly accentuated and more curtly expressed. He argues (1) that since, when men sin against the law of God, the disastrous effects of their transgression do not reach up to Him, and, when they do his will their righteousness confers nothing on Him, since "the service and the loyalty they owe in doing it pays itself," their righteousness gives them no claim on God, or no claim on which they can insist: while, on the other hand, since He gains nothing by their obedience, and loses nothing by their disobedience, He has no conceivable motive for treating them unjustly, for interposing between them and the due reward of their deeds (Verses 5-8). He argues (2) that if, when they call upon God to succour them in their afflictions, God does not at once respond to their appeal, it is much more reasonable to infer that they ask amiss than to conclude that He is wilfully and obstinately deaf to their cry; the fault is far more likely to be with them than with Him (Verses 9-13). And (3) he argues that, so far from being deaf

or indifferent to the cries of the wronged and the suffering, God's eyes are ever on their ways, his ear open to their supplications. Their cause is before Him; sentence is only delayed, not refused; and delayed purely in compassion to suppliants whom the Divine Judge must condemn for many faults were He to pronounce an immediate verdict upon them (Verses 14-16).

In fine, men *are* the better for their righteousness in many ways; but their righteousness is as yet imperfect, as their very afflictions prove, since these are sent to redeem them from their bondage to imperfection: their righteousness is impaired by so many faults and sins that, were God to enter into instant judgment with them, not even the best of men could stand before Him.

Much that Elihu says here we have heard before. Eliphaz had argued that, as God was no gainer by the good deeds of men, they could not claim instant audience and immediate interposition of Him (Chap. xxii. 2-4, 12, 13); and Job had himself explained that the wicked could not "invoke the Most High" when he would, or expect that God would "hear his cry when trouble came upon him" (Chap. xxvii. 9, 10). But Elihu sets these truths in a new and more genial light when he contends that, as God gains nothing from the righteousness of men, and loses nothing by their transgressions, He can have no motive for afflicting men, no motive for afflicting Job, unjustly; reminds the Sufferer that, righteous as he may be, nevertheless, being a man, he must have faults and sins which need to be chastened out of him before the Eternal Judge can wholly acquit and approve him: and urges him to suspect himself of iniquity rather than impute iniquity to God.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Then Elihu took up his discourse and said:

2. *Thinkest thou this to be right, that thou shouldest say,
"My righteousness is greater than God's?"*
3. *Yet thou saidst, "What profit shall it be to me,
And what shall I gain from it more than from sinning?"*
4. *I will answer thee,
And thy friends with thee.*

5. *Look up to the heavens and see,
And behold the clouds, how high they be !*
6. *What canst thou do against Him, if thou sinnest ?
Though thine offences be many, yet what canst thou do against Him ?*
7. *If thou art righteous, what dost thou confer on Him,
And what will He take at thy hand ?*
8. *Thy wickedness can but affect a man like thyself,
And thy righteousness a son of man.*
9. *If men groan at the multitude of oppressions,
And cry out under the arm of the mighty,*
10. *Yet none saith, " Where is God my Maker,
Giver of songs in the night,*
11. *Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth,
And maketh us wiser than the birds of the air ? "*
12. *They cry out indeed—but He answereth not—
Because of the tyranny of the wicked,*
13. *For God will not hear vain outcries,
Neither will the Almighty regard them.*
14. *Even when thou sayest thou shalt never see Him,
Thy cause is before Him : wait therefore for Him.*
15. *But now, because his anger hath visited thee lightly,
And He ignoreth many of thy faults,*
16. *Job openeth his mouth with vanity ;
He multiplieth words without sense.*

With his customary fairness Elihu states (*Verses 2, 3*) the conclusion he is about to attack. So far from wilfully misunderstanding or maliciously misinterpreting the contention of Job, or drawing a harsh and unfair inference from it, in order to score an easy logical victory against him, as some critics affirm, Elihu, as we have seen (*Chap. xxxiv. 9*), positively softens down Job's charge against the Divine equity, and puts it in a *less* crude and offensive form. Again and again Job had asserted his own righteousness ; again and again he had accused God with unrighteously refusing to recognize his righteousness, with treating guilty and guiltless alike, with even laughing at the trials and temptations of the innocent : and what was all this but to claim a "greater" righteousness than God's, and to declare that, great as was his own righteousness, he was none the better for it ? Let the critics who are so hard on Elihu look to themselves, and say

whether it is he who handles Job, or they who handle *him*, unfairly.

It is possible that the "friends" whom, in *Verse 4*, Elihu undertakes to answer in answering Job were, as some Commentators believe, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar; for in their very defence of God they had, however unconsciously, attributed unrighteousness to Him: but, as they were far from attributing to Him the special form of unrighteousness which Elihu now had in his mind, that of failing to punish the wicked and to reward the good, it is surely more rational to see in these friends the evil-doers with whom Job had associated himself by adopting their misconceptions of the Divine character and rule (Chap. xxxiv. 8, 9, 36, 37), and by multiplying words against God. In fine, Elihu is prepared to maintain the absolute righteousness of the Most High against all comers, whether they be wise or foolish, pious or impious.

His first argument is of a somewhat abstract and scholastic tone. Here indeed, as elsewhere, Elihu reminds one of the schoolmen of the Middle Ages, who, with reverence be it said, were not the absolute idiots they are often assumed to have been. Like an eager and eloquent young scholar, with his little bundle of theses to be nailed on any Church or University door, he is prepared to contend for his conclusions, against all opposers, with arguments of the most approved quality. In the disinterestedness of God, for example, he finds a proof of his righteousness. God has no conceivable motive for injustice; *ergo*, He must be just. He is none the richer for the obedience of men, none the poorer for their disobedience. They can neither give anything to Him, nor filch anything from Him. And if He can neither gain by being unjust, nor lose by being just, why should He pervert justice? With no personal interests at stake, such as might warp the judgment of a human, and especially an Oriental, magistrate, there can be no ground for suspecting his equity.

The argument is not by any means so reverent or so conclusive as Elihu thought it. It would be easy to pick logical holes in it, or even to substitute for it an argument of a more sovereign potency. For it is no compliment to the Lord of all to compare Him with the capricious and corrupt despots of

the East, and to imply that, if He *had* private ends to serve, He might prove as unjust as they. And, instead of contending that the Almighty has no conceivable motive for injustice, we might well contend that He has the strongest conceivable motive for being just, inasmuch as He does “gain” what He most desires when men become righteous, and “lose” what He most loves when they become unrighteous. But Elihu, though wise beyond his years, was not wise beyond his time. He could but work with the materials and use the logic of his age, as indeed he does in this very argument.¹ And, however defective his argument may seem to us, it would be very cogent with the men of his own generation, while even to us it can hardly fail to be interesting and instructive to note how he approaches and handles it.

He bids Job look up to heaven and to the clouds of heaven and mark how high they be (*Verse* 5), in order that he may rise to some dim conception of the Majesty of Him who dwells above the heavens, and of the mystery which necessarily encompasses his ways. If God be so high, how can aught that men may do reach up to Him? Neither their goodness nor their wickedness extends to Him; *they* cannot affect the determinations of the Divine Ruler and Judge; they can but affect their fellows, walking on the same level with themselves, and bound to them by many ties (*Verses* 6–8). Unaware, like his contemporaries, of the sympathy which binds Heaven to earth and makes them one, Elihu claims the very remoteness, the very indifference of the Judge eternal, as a proof of his equity, a proof that He administers justice indifferently to all. It is not, therefore, to the injustice of God that Job must trace his sufferings, for there is no injustice with Him; but, as has already been shewn (Chap. xxxiii.), to the Love which chastens men from their sins, and schools them to a larger wisdom, a more perfect obedience.

But why, if God cannot be unjust, and man must be the worse for his wickedness and the better for his righteousness—Why does not God listen to men when, chastened and corrected

¹ Compare Chaps. xxii. 2–4, 12, 13; and vii. 20. There Eliphaz and Job use the selfsame arguments which Elihu uses here. No doubt they were the common property of the time.

by his rod, they appeal to Him for pity and help? To this natural and reasonable inquiry Elihu replies in his second argument (*Verses 9-13*); and if his first argument was somewhat scholastic in its tone and remote from the common facts of life, the second is concrete enough for the most practical of men. For he now argues that, if God does not hear the afflicted when they call upon him, it is not because He does not care to hear, or is loth to answer, but because they ask amiss, because they ask to be released before the moral ends for which they are afflicted have been secured.

One secret of the power of this great Poem is that it gives life, animation, variety, to its single but many-sided argument, which under less noble treatment would soon have become monotonous and wearisome, by conveying its general principles, the thoughts on which the polemic rests and turns, in particular and selected instances; not by abstract reasoning or logical formulæ, but by drawing pictures of human life which suggest more than they say, by embodying its truths in tales. Elihu is true to the picturesque manner of the Book here. He selects his instance, tells his tale, an ancient tale of wrong. In his day—as to this day, especially in the East—a tyrannical abuse of power was one of the commonest sources of human suffering. Subjects groaned under “the multitude of oppressions,” and cried out under the heavy and cruel “arm” of men dressed in a little brief authority, an authority used the more cruelly because it was brief (*Verse 9*). They cried out; yet there was none to answer them nor any that regarded: no voice from heaven responded to their cry; no “bolt from the blue” struck down their oppressors. Why? Simply, asserts Elihu, because their cry was one of mere pain and fear, not one of trust; not *prayer* at all, but mere instinctive noise such as they had learned, or might have learned, from “the beasts of the earth” or from “the birds of the air” (*Verse 11*). The lions roar for food unto God (Psalm civ. 21); the cattle low to Him in their thirst (Joel i. 20); the young ravens cry to Him from their deserted nest (Psalm cxlvii. 9): and God hears them, and feeds them, since they can do no more than roar and scream. But men are not brutes merely, and should not cry out, like the brutes, simply because they are hungry or hurt.

As God "teaches them more than the beasts of the earth," they ought to be "wiser than the birds of the air," although to *these* the ancients ascribed a special and oracular wisdom. It is to raise them out of a merely brutal or animal condition that they are smitten of God and afflicted. *They* should have learned—before they can escape tribulation they *must* learn—to trust in "God their Maker," and even to trust in Him as "Giver of songs in the night" (*Verse* 10). It becomes *men* to look through the shadows of discipline to the light that lies beyond it; to believe in the dawn of a better day even when the day of ease and happy conditions darkens into a night of loss and grief and pain. Men have not risen to their full moral stature till they can make God's statutes their songs in the house of their bondage as well as in "the house of their pilgrimage," and even though they have been brought into bondage by their very obedience to his statutes. *This* is the end God has in view when He chastens and afflicts the sons of men—to raise them to their full moral stature, to train them to their full moral strength: and, till this end be reached, how can He listen to their cries for deliverance?

Too often it is the mere tyranny of the wicked against which they cry out, not the wickedness of it (*Verse* 12): their cries are vain (*Verse* 13)—"*vanities*," merely muscular contortions of writhing lips, not sacred inward realities, not the sighings of a contrite and chastened spirit. Till these are replaced by prayers, and prayers inspired by a sincere trust in the Goodness which chastens men only for their good, the Almighty cannot and will not "regard" them.

Let Job ponder this illustration of the Divine ways till he reaches the principle which underlies it, and conclude that if God has not heard *him*, it is simply because the gracious moral ends for which God has afflicted him have not even yet been secured.

But—and this is Elihu's third argument—is Job quite sure that God has *not* heard him, that he has cried to Heaven in vain? *He* was not a mere animal man, pinched by want and pain till he exclaimed at his wrong. Let him be assured, then, that God *had* heard him; that his "cause," or suit, though he deemed it passed by, was being tried and weighed; and

that the Divine Judge was ready to pronounce a verdict, was only withheld from pronouncing it indeed by his consideration for the suitor who, if he had cried out to Him, had also cried out against Him (*Verse 14*). It was Job who was unprepared to hear, not God who was unprepared to speak. Obviously God's end in afflicting him had not yet been reached; or how should Job have charged Him so foolishly? Did he want the Almighty to pronounce a final verdict upon him while he was arguing and complaining "like the wicked," while he was multiplying vain and senseless words against a God who, ignoring many of his faults, had refrained from inflicting the heavier and severer strokes of his wrath (*Verses 15, 16*)? Would it not be wise of Job both to rest in God and to wait patiently for Him? Was not the very delay of which he complained a merciful delay? Was it not gracious of God, and not ungracious, to postpone sentence upon him until it could be one of cordial and complete approval?

These I take to be the arguments adduced by Elihu in this Chapter. And, whatever may be their defects, they surely must have been very convincing and welcome to the men to whom he spoke; while even to us they are hardly less welcome, since they remind us of truths most surely believed among us. It is impossible, I think, to consider them fairly without being afresh impressed with the sagacity of the Son of Barachel, with his penetrating insight and quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. When he argues that our moral actions must have issue on earth if not in heaven, must produce results on men if not on God, and concludes that they tell only on man and extend only to the earth, we may correct his inference, since *we* know that they also reach to heaven and tell on God, bringing Him the one sole "gain" which He desires or can receive. But when Elihu argues that the moral ends of human life are its supreme ends, and that to secure these it is well for us to patiently and hopefully endure any suffering by which they may be secured; when he argues that, if the Divine Ruler of men delay to interpose on our behalf, and to end the conflict and agony to which we are called, it is only that He may inure us by conflict for service

and make us perfect by the things we suffer, then he speaks to our very hearts, and reminds us of truths as precious to us and as consolatory as they evidently were to him.

FOURTH DISCOURSE.

CHAPTERS XXXVI. AND XXXVII.

Among the many charges which Job had launched against the Almighty was the complaint that He hid Himself from men in a darkness which even the righteous could not penetrate, that He made his providence an inscrutable mystery which it was as impossible to vindicate as it was to apprehend (*e.g.*, Chap. xxiii. 3-9). It is to this charge that Elihu replies in his fourth and last Discourse. He contends that though men must not hope to solve all the mysteries of the Divine Character and Government, yet the providence of God is not so inscrutable as Job had affirmed it to be; that the very sufferings and calamities which seem to obscure it are really designed to open the eyes of men on the rules by which their life is governed, and to make them aware of the modes in which, often unconsciously, they violate them. For all practical, *i.e.*, for all moral, purposes, he maintains the design of Providence to be sufficiently evident. Practically, all the difficulties which encompass it spring from its darker aspect, from the miseries, undeserved or inexplicable, which it inflicts on the children of men. But if these miseries are intended, as he is sure that they are, to teach men that they have sinned, or to purge them from their sins and defects, we know enough to reconcile us to the tribulations we are called to endure; enough, therefore, to explain and vindicate the way God takes with us. In short, Elihu once more falls back on his fundamental idea—his main contribution to the argument of the Poem—*viz.*, the didactic and disciplinary function of Suffering.

This idea, after a characteristic introductory phrase or two (Chap. xxxvi. Verses 2-4) Elihu proceeds to develop and adapt to his present purpose. He argues the Divine Providence

to be both intelligible and just, (α) because God obviously renders “justice” to the distressed, and “will not let the wicked live” (Verses 5-7); (β) because the very distresses of men are intended to illuminate their minds, quicken their conscience, and reform their lives (Verses 8-10); and (γ) because if they hearken and repent, they “complete their days in good;” while if they will not hearken, they perish in their sins (Verses 11-15).

Having thus thrown his little beam of light into the darkness which vexed and obscured Job's thoughts, Elihu makes a personal application of his argument. He assures him (Verses 16-25) that the intention of God in afflicting *him* is both intelligible and just, since his afflictions are designed to lead him through strait and narrow into broader and happier conditions, *per angusta ad angusta*; warns him of the inevitable results of his impatience of the Divine corrections; and begs him not to yield to the despair which moves him to loathe his very life, but to repent of the sins his afflictions were intended to correct and to lay to heart the lessons they were intended to teach.

As his Discourse draws to a close, Elihu becomes aware of a tropical storm which is labouring up through the disordered sky—fit emblem of the tempest which had swept across the soul of Job, blotting out all the lights of hope. With exquisite tact the Poet prepares us for the next and closing section of this great poem by setting him to describe the tempest out of which Jehovah is about to speak, and so to describe it as both to suggest to Job that God had been in that very storm of calamity which had obscured his vision of the Almighty, and to give us a glimpse, a forecast, of that sun of prosperity and favour which is yet to “come forth in gold,” to shine on Job with dazzling and enriching lustre, when the bitter wind of adversity has blown by, and the clouds that have so long overshadowed him have been swept away.

The mere description, viewed simply as a work of art, has, I suppose, never been equalled, much less surpassed; not even by David, although in Psalm xxix. he makes us hear peal after peal of thunder breaking on seas and mountains and woods as the storm comes nearer and nearer still, from the first crash

of its fury rolling and reverberating among the hills till it dies away into faint and distant mutterings, only to break out on us in its full strength once more. Compared with this grand picture, or even with the less sublime description of David, the famous passage in the Coran (Sura ii. v. 18), albeit it is said to have converted the poet *Lebid* by its mere beauty and power, sinks into utter insignificance. It may be well, however, to quote this other Arabian description of a great storm, if only that the reader may make the comparison for himself. Speaking of unbelievers, Mohammed says: They are like those who, "when a storm-cloud cometh out of heaven, big with darkness, thunder, and lightning, thrust their fingers into their ears because of the thunder-clap, for fear of death. God is round about the infidels. *The lightning almost snatcheth out their eyes.* So oft as it gleameth on them, they walk on in it; but when darkness cometh upon them, they stop. And if God pleased, of their ears and of their eyes would He surely deprive them. Verily, God is Almighty!" There is, indeed, one graphic line—I have italicized it—in this much admired passage; and it has this in common with the description of Elihu, that it sees, and makes us see, *God* in the storm: but who does not feel that, whether for picturesqueness or sublimity, it is on a wholly different and much lower level than that of either Elihu or David?

And yet it is not for its beauty mainly, nor for its sublimity, that the pencil of the inspired Artist lingers over it. The ends he has in view are moral chiefly, though no doubt he takes his wonted delight in feats of literary skill. He describes the tempest thus lovingly and impressively because it is the tempest out of which Jehovah is to speak to the perturbed spirit of the man who has so long been challenging and entreating Him to appear. He makes Elihu recognize and emphasize the presence of God in the storm which rolls and thunders above their heads, because it is Elihu's chief aim to make Job recognize that same mighty but gracious Hand in the great tempest of affliction which has swept over his soul. He lingers and lays a special emphasis on the clear shining after the rain, on the new glory of the heaven and the earth from which the storm has swept all that darkens

and defiles, because he would thus convey to Job the hope that, when he has been tried and cleansed, he too shall enter on a brighter happier day. And, moreover, he expends his full power in his description of the tempest which veils the Almighty, because he sees, and would have us and all men see, that kindred religious emotions are aroused in us by the great convulsions of Nature and by the tribulations which desolate the soul—both inducing awe, humility, fear, the sense of weakness and of our need of a Divine Stay; because he knows, and would have us know, that in the spiritual as in the natural world the very forces which seem most irresistible and most adverse to us are really God's ministers for our good.

CHAPTERS XXXVI. AND XXXVII.

CHAP. XXXVI. *Then Elihu spake further :*

2. *Wait for me a little, and I will shew thee
 That I still have words for God ;*
3. *I will fetch my knowledge from afar,
 And will ascribe righteousness to my Maker*
4. *For truly my words are not feigned,
 One of sincere thoughts is with thee.*
5. *Behold, God is mighty, yet He despiseth none,
 He is mighty by strength of heart.*
6. *He will not let the wicked live,
 But rendereth justice to the distressed ;*
7. *He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous,
 But seateth them with kings on thrones for ever,
 And they are exalted :*
8. *If they be bound in fetters,
 And held in cords of affliction,*
9. *Then He sheweth them their doings
 And their transgressions—that they have become vainglorious ;*
10. *He also openeth their ear to reproof,
 And commandeth them to turn from evil :*
11. *If they hearken and do Him service,
 They will complete their days in good
 And their years in pleasures ;*
12. *But if they hearken not,
 They fling themselves on the sword
 And expire for lack of knowledge.*
13. *Thus the impious of heart heap up wrath ;*

14. *They cry not to Him when He bindeth them :
 Their soul dieth in youth,
 And their life passeth away among the unclean*
15. *But He delivereth the afflicted by their affliction,
 And openeth their ears by calamity.*
16. *Thee also will He lure out of the jaws of the strait
 Into a broad space, where there is no straitness,
 And that which is on thy table shall be full of fatness.*
17. *But if thou hast filled up the cause of the wicked,
Therefore have cause and judgment taken hold of each other.*
18. *Because there is wrath,
 Beware lest He drive thee forth with strokes,
 And a great ransom fail to deliver thee.*
19. *Shall thine outcries deliver thee from thy distress,
 Or all the struggles of thy strength ?*
20. *Pant not for the night,
 In which men descend into Hades.*
21. *Beware lest thou turn to wickedness,
For thou hast preferred this to affliction.*
22. *Lo, God exalteth by his power !
 And who is a teacher like to Him ?*
23. *Who hath prescribed his way to Him,
Or who can say, " Thou doest wrong " ?*
24. *Remember that thou magnify his works
 Which men do sing,
 On which all men gaze,*
25. *Contemplating them from afar.*
26. *Behold, God is great, and we know Him not,
 Nor can we count the number of his years !*
27. *When He draweth up the drops of water
They are fused into rain, and form his vapour*
28. *Which the clouds do distil
 And drop down plenteously :*
29. *But who can understand the spreading of the clouds,
 The crash of his pavilion ?*
30. *Lo, He spreadeth out his light around Him,
And covereth Himself from the depths of the sea ;*
31. *For by these He judgeth the nations,
 And furnisheth food in plenty :*
32. *He clotheth his palms with lightning,
 And slingeth it against the foe :*

33. *The crash thereof announceth
The fierceness of his wrath against iniquity.*

- CHAP. XXXVII. *At this also my heart throbs
And leapeth out of its place.*
2. *Hear ye, O hear, the tumult of his voice,
And the muttering that goeth forth from his mouth :*
3. *He flingeth its flash across the whole heaven,
And his lightning to the ends of the earth ;*
4. *After it roareth a voice,
With his majestic voice He thundereth :*
 He holdeth back nought when his voice is heard !
5. *God thundereth marvellously with his voice ;
Great things doeth He beyond our reach :*
6. *For He saith to the snow, " Fall thou on the earth ! "*
 *Also to the streaming rain,
And to the heavy rain of his strength :*
7. *He sealeth up every man's hand,
That men may consider his handiwork ;*
8. *Then slink the wild beasts to their dens,
And abide in their lair ;*
9. *The whirlwind cometh from his secret place,
And the cold from his cloud-scattering winds ;*
10. *The frost is given by the breath of God
And the broad waters are straitened :*
11. *Yea, He chargeth the thick cloud with rain,
He driveth on the lightning cloud ;*
12. *By his piloting it is turned hither and thither,
To accomplish all his behests
Over the face of the broad earth,
Whether He cause it to come for a scourge,
Or for the good of his land.*
13. *Hearken unto this, O Job !
Stand still, and scan the wondrous works of God !*
14. *Knowest thou when God ordained them,
And bade his clouds to gleam with light ?*
15. *Knowest thou the poisonings of the clouds,
The marvels of Him who is perfect in knowledge,*
16. *Thou whose garments become warm
When He stilleth the earth with the Southwind ?*
17. *Hast thou, with Him, beaten out the firmament, thin
Yet strong, like a molten mirror ?*
18. *Teach us what we can say to Him !
We cannot order our words for darkness.*

20. *Shall it be told Him that I speak?
If a man speak, it may be his destruction;*
21. *For man cannot even look upon the sun
When it is bright among the clouds,
Or a wind hath passed and cleared them off,*
22. *When, after a Northwind, he cometh forth in gold.
How awful, then, the majesty of God!*
23. *The Almighty! We cannot find Him out.
Great in strength and judgment, and of a perfect equity,
He will render an account to no man.*
24. *Therefore let men fear Him
Whom not even the wise in heart can behold.*

At the close of his second Discourse (Chap. xxxiv. Verse 33), Elihu had paused in his vindication of the Divine Justice, and called on Job to reply, if he had any reply to make. Job, taken at unawares then perhaps, had not responded to the summons. But now, it would seem, he had found, or thought he had found, some weak point in Elihu's argument, and by look or gesture indicates that he is about to reply to it. But now, too, Elihu sees that his argument is wellnigh exhausted, that he has but little to add to it; and hence (*Chapter xxxvi. Verse 2*) he courteously requests Job to "wait for him a little," to grant him a few words more, in order that, when he replies he may reply to *all* the words for God which Elihu has to allege. In the wide realm of Nature and History, which Elihu has traversed, there is yet that which testifies to the righteousness of the great Maker and Ruler of the world; and this he would fetch even "from afar," and add to what he has already advanced (*Verse 3*).

Yet, it must be confessed that Elihu adds little, if anything, that is new or recondite to his exposition of the character and providence of God. As we shall soon see, he does but sum up all that he has said before—though he so sums it up as to suggest that the Divine Providence is not the wholly impenetrable mystery Job had affirmed it to be—and add a pungent personal application of his argument to the case of Job. It may be that he intended, after the brief *résumé* contained in Verses 5–15, to take a new departure, to soar to new heights, to wing his way afar in quest of new

and more potent words for God ; and that he was driven from his intention by the approach of the great tempest, or diverted from it by the grandeur and beauty of the storm-swept heaven and earth.

But whatever it was that broke his purpose off, he would be the less disconcerted by it, since it was not for victory, but truth, that he was contending (*Verse 4*), and contending with the most absolute sincerity. The second clause of this Verse is commonly rendered, "One of *perfect knowledge* is with thee," and has, of course, been cited in proof of the insolent and intolerable conceit of the Speaker by those who condemn him as a chattering coxcomb, a talkative fool. But though this rendering is an admissible, and even a literal, translation of the words in the original, it quite fails to convey their sense. For neither here, nor in any of the *Chokmah* writings, does the word for "knowledge" stand for universal knowledge, or the word for "perfect" stand for absolute perfection. All that the words imply, when interpreted by Hebrew usage, is, as the parallel between the two clauses of this Verse should have suggested, that Elihu is perfectly convinced of the cogency of the arguments he is about to employ, that he is fully persuaded of the truth of that view of the moral government of God which he is about to oppose to the view maintained alike by Job and the Friends. It is not, in fine, "perfect knowledge" which he claims, but "absolute sincerity;" so that here, once more, the charge against him breaks down so soon as it is carefully examined.

After this brief but characteristic exordium, Elihu proceeds at once to argue that the providence of God, so far from being wholly inscrutable, is both intelligible and defensible because it is both just and kind.

There is a visible and obvious justice in it. For (*Verse 5*), though God is mighty, He neither—let Job say what he will—despises nor neglects the cause of any man, however lowly, however distressed. Though He is mighty, He is "mighty by strength of heart;" *i.e.* according to the Hebrew idiom, the crowning and most conclusive proof of his power is the penetrating and sympathetic understanding which enables Him to discern at a glance the right or wrong of every cause sub-

mitted to Him, and leads Him to judge all men and all actions by an appropriate moral standard or ideal. He looks quite through the outward shows of men (*Verse 6*) and sees the motives by which they are inspired—detecting a wickedness unworthy to live even when it is shrouded under the most prosperous conditions, the most pious professions, and discovering a righteousness that commands his respect under conditions the most adverse and distressful. It is by these inward moral qualities, and not by the outward forms and shows of life, that his awards are determined (*Verse 7*); the principle of these awards being, at least on its positive side, that even under the utmost pressure of adversity the righteous should be in his “eyes,” *i.e.* in his favour and regard, and that, in the end, their outward conditions should be as royal and affluent as their inward life; while in respect of the unrighteous we are left to infer that this same even-handed justice will

Commend the ingredients of their poisoned chalice
To their own lips.

In short, Verses 6 and 7 contain the proof of the thesis stated in Verse 5. They shew that God is “mighty by strength of heart,” by his searching and sympathetic understanding, since He penetrates through all outward disguises to the motives by which men are actuated, to the moral aims they pursue, and bases his awards on character, not on condition.

And if that be one of the ruling principles or intentions of God’s providence, as Elihu is fully persuaded that it is, who can contend that his providence is utterly unintelligible, that his ways are wholly past finding out?

In *Verses 8–10* Elihu argues more distinctly that God’s providence is kind as well as just, and that even when it most seems unkind. And here his main contention is that our best knowledge, and, above all, self-knowledge, is

Bought only with a weary care,
And wisdom means a world of pains;

or, if we prefer to take a summary from his own lips, his main contention is (*Verse 15*) that God delivers men from their afflictions “*by* their afflictions,” and opens their ear to

instruction by the very calamities which chastise their sins. He arrests and fetters them in "cords of affliction" (*Verse 8*), in order (*Verse 9*) "to shew them their doings," *i.e.* to expose to them the true character of their own acts, to make them see that their sufferings spring from some violation of the pure and kindly laws by which their lives are ruled. And in the final clause of the *Verse*—"that they have become *vain-glorious*"—whether by accident or by intention, Elihu hits on the very transgression of which Job has really been guilty. He had been "*vainglorious*," in that he had claimed his righteousness as his own, and had stood proudly upon it, not tracing it to its Divine origin—a sin which he afterwards confesses and bitterly repents (*Chaps. xl. 3-5; xlii. 3-5*). It may be that Elihu meant no more than to suggest, in passing, that the sin into which men most commonly and easily slip, and which lies at the root of most of their other sins, is self-confidence, an overweening conceit of themselves, of their own powers, virtues, and importance; and even in that case he shews a singular penetration; for daily experience proves how easily every man persuades himself that he stands at the centre of the universe and assumes that all things take colour and worth from their relation to him. But it may be that, while the Friends had been wildly groping after the transgression by which Job had provoked his sufferings, and, with the most obvious untruth, had charged him with the vulgar crimes of the vulgar tyrant of their age and clime, Elihu had detected his true offence, had seen that he carried himself too proudly in his controversy with God, that he had been "consumed with confidence;" that even in his happy autumn days he had been too apt to say—

*I shall die in my nest,
And shall lengthen out my days like the phoenix;
My glory is fresh upon me,
And my bow reneweth its spring in my hand:*

while in the long and bitter winter of his affliction he had been too conscious of his integrity, too self-confident and self-asserting. And in this case it must be admitted that Elihu shews a really marvellous insight into the character of Job, and hits the very gold of his mark.

But the kindness of God appears not only in convincing men of their sins by the calamities which follow hard upon them, but also in that these calamities are intended to wean and save them from the sins of which they have been convinced (*Verse 9*). They open the ears of men to reproof; but they also "command them to turn from" the evils which they reprove. They not only say to men, "You have sinned, and this is God's sentence on your sins;" they also add—

and 'twere good
You leaned unto his sentence with what patience
Your wisdom may inform you:

if they are, and because they are, a Divine judgment, they are also a Divine call to repentance and amendment.

Two ruling intentions of the providence of God thus become clear to us, so clear that we can no longer pronounce it wholly unintelligible. God's rule is *just*; here is one shaft of light streaming through the great darkness. Even when He afflicts men God is *kind*, since He afflicts them only for their good; here is another shaft of light stretching quite across the mystery by which our life is encompassed, and shedding sensible beams of comfort and hope into every troubled heart that can receive it.

Nor is this all. Elihu has discovered a third principle in the providential rule of God which at once illuminates and vindicates it. Men are not, as the Friends had argued, immediately condemned to receive the due and full reward of their sins. Spaces for repentance and calls to amendment are granted to the wicked no less than to the good. The final awards which determine their lot are not pronounced until they have taken the deliberate and final decisions which determine their character and bent. They are not left to fling away their lives heedlessly and in the dark. A course of Divine discipline, by which they are taught to know themselves as they are is vouchsafed them; they are both shewn their transgressions and warned to turn from them: in more modern terms, they are both convinced of sin and invited to repent. It is not till they sin against the light, or are quickened by it to a new and better life, that their fate is

determined—deliberately determined therefore, and by themselves.

This view of the providence of God is, it must be confessed, not only more intelligible and reasonable, but also more inward, subtle, spiritual than that of the Friends, and commends itself to us as at once more true to fact and more consonant with our natural sense of justice. Elihu develops it in Verses 11–15. In *Verse 11* he touches on the happy fate which they secure for themselves who learn the lesson of this Divine discipline, and abandon the sins for, and by, which they have been rebuked: they may miss the grosser pleasures of sense and the vulgar forms of prosperity; but, as the words translated “prosperity” and “pleasures” in the Authorized Version imply, they gain “a finer and more inward sense of enjoyment,” and find that “all pure sources of joy” have been thrown open to them: in their innermost substance all things are theirs—theirs at once *in right*, theirs *in fact* so soon as they are able to appropriate them. In *Verses 12–14* he dwells a little on the unhappy fate of those who will not learn the lesson of Discipline, but cleave to the sins from which they have been commanded to turn, and of the true nature of which they have been made aware. Continuing in and adding to their sins, they naturally provoke the hand of Justice (*Verse 12*); nay, in Elihu’s fine graphic idiom, “they *fling themselves on the sword*,” “precipitate themselves on the weapon” against which they have been warned, their sin in natural and due course bringing forth misery and death. Thus (*Verse 13*) they heap up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, since even when God binds them with cords of affliction (*Verse 8*) they will not be restrained, when He rebukes them they will not turn to Him in penitence, nor listen to his reproof. And that day of wrath will come upon them only too soon; for (*Verse 14*) “their soul dieth in youth,” *i.e.*, they perish prematurely, like young men who have tainted life at its very spring by their unclean lusts, or like—for that is the implication of the word here rendered “unclean”—those most miserable lads who were “devoted” to the service of Astarte and other heathen “divinities,” and the traffic with whom is the most hideous blot on the civilization of the antique

world. In *Verse 15* he returns on the happier alternative of Discipline, and states once more, and in a very pregnant and impressive formula, the Divine intention in all the afflictions of men—an intention, however, which only takes effect on those who turn at his reproof. That intention is to save men from their afflictions *by their afflictions*, to “uncover their ears,” to enlighten their minds and enlarge their scope by the very calamities which seem to darken their lives and restrain their steps.

By these three arguments, then, Elihu seeks to vindicate the ways of God to men. That providence, he contends, must be intelligible, and must commend itself to our intelligence, which we see to be just, and kind, and, at least in aim and intention, redemptive. Yet, as I have already admitted, in all this Elihu advances nothing new, fetches nothing “from afar:” for in Verses 5–7 he does but briefly sum up the argument of Chapter xxxiv., in which he had already contended for the justice of God’s rule; in Verses 8–10 he does but sum up the argument of Chapter xxxiii., in which he had already insisted on the goodness of God in teaching and saving men by their afflictions; while in Verses 11–14 he does but sum up the argument of Chapter xxxv., in which he had already argued that the righteous must be the better and the happier for their righteousness, and the wicked the worse and the more miserable for their wickedness.

From this summary of the principles which, as he reads it, regulate the moral government of God, Elihu advances to a personal application of them (Verses 16–25), which reveals the full difference of his tone from that of the Friends who had preceded him. *They* had seen in Job’s losses and sufferings only the Nemesis of his own acts, only a just vengeance on his sins; *he* sees in them a Divine mercy, an instant and urgent appeal to repent of his own overweening estimate of himself, of that trust in his own righteousness which converted it, or went perilously near to converting it, into self-righteousness. To them, especially when the heat of controversy and the sting of defeat had dulled the edge of natural kindness, it had seemed that they had done well to be angry with Job, and that they could prophesy nothing for him

but utter ruin and despair: to him, it was equally clear that God was teaching Job a larger wisdom by his sorrows, and saving him by the very afflictions in which they read his condemnation, and that Job therefore, if only he could frame himself to the Divine purpose, should be strong in patience, in courage, and in hope.

Rising into something of a prophetic strain, he announces to Job the Divine intention *for him* in a tone of unwavering certitude, if not of absolute authority. He is so convinced of God's merciful purpose and aim in all the sorrows of human life that he can assure Job, without hesitation or misgiving, that it is God's intention to instruct and save *him* by his affliction (*Verse 16*), to allure him out of the jaws of the distress which threatens to swallow him up into all broad and happy conditions, and to replace the bread and water of affliction with that bountiful "table" which the poets of Israel so often employed to denote an abundance of life and joy. The only doubt he can possibly entertain whether the general Divine aim will be reached in this special instance springs from a fact on which he has animadverted more than once before (*Chap. xxxiv. 8, 36, 37*). By his obstinate questionings of the justice and goodness of God, questionings appropriate only in the mouths of wicked men, Job had seemed to ally himself with evildoers, and committed a sin which carried its own punishment with it; his false judgment of God *being*, as well as provoking, God's judgment on him (this seems to be the sense of *Verse 17*, though it is very difficult to give an adequate rendering of it). If that be so, judgment has indeed trodden on the very heels of offence; and if Job persists in his sin there can be no hope for him: for how shall a man be saved from the punishment which a hard and false conception of God involves so long as he cleaves to that misconception? Hence (*Verse 18*) Elihu is very urgent with Job to avert his misery by turning from his sin, by abandoning his hard thoughts of God. He persuades him by "the terrors of the Lord." That God's wrath is abroad no man knows better than Job, on whom (as he himself believes at least) that wrath has fallen so heavily. Let him beware of it, then. Let him not, by holding fast, against his better mind, to such

misleading thoughts of God as the wicked cherish, still further provoke that wrath, still further intensify his misery. For if he does, no ransom, however great, can possibly deliver him; and no wild and piercing outcries against the Divine justice, nor any furious struggle with his fate (*Verse 19*). Only a change of heart, nothing short of rising to truer better thoughts of God, could possibly save him from those wrong and hard thoughts of God which were the very soul and spring of his misery. Let him not "pant for the night," then (*Verse 20*); *i.e.*, let him not loathe his life and crave to be cut off from the light. Hades itself—and on this last cast, or change, Job had come, as we have seen, to set great hope (*e.g.*, Chaps. xiv. and xix.)—could do nothing for him unless it gave him those calmer truer thoughts of God which were well within his reach even here. Instead of pressing forward to a change he was unprepared to meet, and by which, till he came to a better mind, he could not benefit, let him rather turn (*Verse 21*) from the debasing conception of God which he shared with the wicked, and by entertaining which he had shewn that it was easier for him to think badly of God than of himself, easier to question the Divine justice than to bear affliction patiently. With an accent of surprise and joy, as his new conception, his discovery of the aim and intention of the Divine Providence, returns upon him, or with an accent of astonishment and rebuke that Job should be so blind to what was so clear to him, Elihu exclaims (*Verse 22*), "*Lo, God exalteth by his power!*" That is the golden secret of his rule.¹ Not to punish men merely, and still less to destroy them by driving them to conclusions of despair, but that He may raise them to a larger wisdom, a firmer trust, an ampler freedom, has God made his power the servant of his law, or given his law power to execute and avenge itself, and "fix'd his canon 'gainst" the evils by which men wrong and injure their own souls. With an accent of triumph Elihu demands, as well he might, "Who is a teacher like to Him?" For, not by dreams only, nor only by supernatural disclosures of his Will, but also

¹ This too was Eliphaz's conception of that secret, as we learn from Chapter v. Verses 9–16. Between that Chapter and this, indeed, there are many parallels and resemblances.

by their own daily experience of the facts of life God convinces men that they cannot do evil with impunity, and cannot do well without gaining by it.

Verse 23 may be a warning to Job, who had, no doubt, assumed to prescribe to God, to dictate to Him other and better ways than his own (*e.g.*, Chaps. xxi. 17–21; and xxiv., 1–12); but it is more in harmony with the general tone of this exhortation, I think, to take it as meaning that, while Job cannot claim his righteousness as purely his own, the goodness of God, the incomparable Teacher, the constant Redeemer and Benefactor of men, is purely self-derived; that if He is “responsible to no one,” so that no man can say to Him, “Thou doest wrong,” He “owes nothing to any one,” but is just simply because it is his nature to be just, and good simply because He cannot be other than good. Instead of criticizing or censuring his works, therefore, whether in nature or history, let Job “magnify” and celebrate them (*Verses 24 and 25*). They have been a theme for song in all ages and all lands, winning the admiration of men of every blood, and filling their lips with praise.

By this last touch Elihu prepares us for what is to come. It is a deft and happy transition. From the summons to a reverent admiration of all God’s works, or of his whole method of working, we are led on to contemplate one of his grandest and most impressive works—a tropical thunderstorm—with an admiration which now deepens into awe and now rises into an adoring thankfulness and joy.

For it is at this point of Elihu’s Discourse that a great tempest is supposed to have swept up from the distance. As he catches sight of it, and watches its approach, he breaks off from his argument to give a voice to the storm, to describe and to interpret it. The opening exclamation of this new paragraph (*Verse 26*), however, may be only a point of transition, like *Verses 24 and 25*; and we may read it in a double sense. (1) In its backward aspect, its connection with Elihu’s argument for the intelligibility of the Divine Providence, we may take it as frankly conceding that, while we can discover certain ruling principles in the moral government of God—can

see, for instance, that it is just, that it is kind, that it aims at our redemption—we nevertheless cannot find out either God or the government of God to perfection. The mystery is lightened, not resolved; its pressure eased, but not removed. The Eternal cannot be wholly brought within the limits of time; the Infinite cannot be comprehended by the finite. We both know God, and know Him not; we may search into, but we cannot grasp, the whole circle of his activity, the whole compass of his intentions and aims. (2) In its forward aspect, its relation to the following description of the majesty of God as revealed in storm and tempest, we may take it as an ejaculation of profound awe and astonishment, as expressing Elihu's sense of his incompetence to reach an adequate description of a Majesty that overwhelms him; he may catch (Comp. Chap. xxvi. 14) some faint "whisper" of the Voice whose words are divine, but the "full thunder of its power," who can comprehend or convey?

Having moderated our expectations by this brief disclaimer, Elihu turns to the task he has set himself, or to which he has been unexpectedly summoned. From his point of vantage, the high-piled *mezbele*, he watches the storm as it sails swiftly through the labouring sky, and marks the conflict of light with darkness; he takes note of the flying clouds in the van of the storm, clouds that change and scatter as they fly; and, as the great heat-drops fall which announce the arrival of the tempest, he begins to describe what he sees, and the contrasts which this sublime spectacle suggests to his mind, never for a moment forgetting, or suffering us to forget, that it is *God* who stands behind all the changeful phenomena of Nature and rules them by his will.

He commences with the mystery of the rain, and handles it so wisely, says the Talmud, that, had he only explained "the origin of the rain," it would have been enough to justify his intrusion on the scene. But the rabbis are very facile in their admiration of their own poets; and it must be confessed that there is nothing very recondite in Elihu's treatment of this daily and beneficent mystery. On the most modern interpretation of which they will admit, *Verses* 27 and 28 do but tell us that the misty evaporations drawn up on high by the heat of

the sun are condensed or “fused” into water by the colder air of the heights to which they float, and are distilled and shed on the thirsty earth by those moving fountains, the clouds, into which they have been formed. But he does not profess to give us the “origin” of the rain in any scientific sense of that term, nor to have solved the mystery whether of sunshine or of showers, of fair weather or of foul. For (*Verse 29*) he confesses that he does not understand, he affirms that no man can understand, either “the spreading of the clouds,” or what he calls “the crash of God’s pavilion.” The image of the *Verse* is, no doubt, the setting up and taking down of the tent, or tabernacle, in which God is assumed to dwell. In the spreading out of cloud-curtains, with all their pomp of form and hue, when the heavens are still and serene, Elihu sees the erection of that royal tent; while the roll of the thunder through the stormy sky is but the fall and rattle of the poles when the tent is struck, and He who sojourns within them is about to pass on his way. For, to him, natural phenomena are nothing apart from the Creative Spirit by whom they are informed; they are to be studied and admired only because they reflect his moods and reveal his purpose, only for the moral significance with which they are fraught. Hence (*Verses 30 and 31*), though Elihu is moved to admiration, astonishment, awe, as he sees Jehovah now clothe Himself with light and now conceal Himself behind the clouds He has drawn up from the depths of the sea, it is only, or mainly, because “by these,” *i.e.*, these atmospheric changes, these marvellous phenomena, He both judges men and blesses them—condemning them to want and misery by excessive and untimely rain and heat or by withholding heat and rain, or sending them, through kindly warmth and seasonable rains, plenteous harvests and the joy of harvest. To Elihu at least it was clear that all the forces of Nature are ministers of God who do his pleasure; and that hence they subserve moral ends, and are adapted to the moral conditions of “nations,” if not of individual men.

But the storm is rolling nearer as Elihu speaks; flash succeeds to flash, peal follows peal; and he can no longer waver between the contrasts of the skies or touch on their

serener aspects, but bends his thoughts wholly on the dark, terrible, and threatening aspects they now turn upon him (*Verses 32 and 33*). To him the flash reveals a Divine Warrior emerging from his tent of clouds, "*clothing his palms with lightning and slinging it against the foe*,"—a superb figure, classical indeed in its simplicity and strength, incomparably superior to Mohammed's poor conceit of "the lightnings that almost snatch out our eyes;" and in the crash of the thunder he hears an awful Voice proclaiming the fierceness of God's wrath against iniquity.¹ So fierce for a moment is the outburst of the storm that Elihu can think of nothing else. He is in a kind of extasy (*Chapter xxxvii. Verse 1*). His heart "throbs" as with a life of its own, and "leaps" out of its place, so profoundly is he moved by blended terror and admiration. He can only cry (*Verse 2*), as the shattering thunder rolls and reverberates above them, "Hear, O hear, the tumult of his voice, and the muttering that goeth forth from his mouth!" He can only point to the vivid lightning that stabs the darkness (*Verse 3*), and bid his crouching and astonished auditors look and see how God flings its flash across the whole wide space of heaven and to the very ends of the earth. And, as once more the peal follows the flash, he once

¹ So, at least, I read Verse 33, not without some misgivings, however. Gesenius may well call this Verse *locus obscurissimus*. It is so obscure that we may reasonably suspect the text to be corrupt. The rendering of the Authorized Version, "The noise thereof sheweth concerning it, the cattle also concerning the vapour," may have had an intelligible meaning in the minds of the Company of Translators, though it is difficult to see what meaning it could have had. Ewald, Delitzsch, and many more are at least intelligible when they render the Verse, "His voice," or "His thunder announceth him, and even the cattle that He is approaching:" for here, of course, the allusion is to the uneasy foreboding which renders the herds restless when a thunder-storm is in the air. But Gesenius, Hitzig, and Fürst vote for the reading adopted in the text. And though the weight of critical authority just turns, perhaps, against this reading, it is as close to the original as any other, if not, as Canon Cook thinks, closer. And in that case we may surely give the preference, the whole passage being so noble, to the nobler reading. To come down from that splendid Warrior, slinging his lightnings against the foe, to the dim prevision of the restless herds would be a terrible anti-climax; while to give the fierce crash of the thunder a voice, and make it proclaim a still fiercer wrath against unrighteousness, carries on the figure in a kindred strain, and puts, as it were, a challenge into the Warrior's mouth.

more bids them (*Verse 4*) listen to the Voice which thunders out its challenge against iniquity, and mark how at the "roar" of that mighty Voice "nothing is held back," but the whole contents of the skies—rain, hail, wind—are discharged on the labouring and troubled earth.

For the moment at which the storm is at its worst his whole mind is dominated by the terrors of the scene; but it is only for a moment. For now, with the brief generalization of *Verse 5*, on the innumerable wonders by which God suggests "thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls," he passes into a more sustained and reflective mood. The tempest reminds him of kindred manifestations of the Divine Majesty. Verses 6-10 cover the entire season between the autumnal and the vernal equinoxes. We have the heavy "gush" or downpour of Autumn ("the *early* rain"), and the more genial showers of Spring ("the *latter* rain"); and, between these, the falls of snow, which often cause great havoc in the Hauran, and are always an evil portent to the Eastern mind, together with the keen frosty winds of the Syrian winter. During this wintry season the labours of the husbandmen, as well as the wanderings of the nomadic tribes, are interrupted by the severity of the weather, and every man, however unwillingly, is driven to take shelter and repose. This is the meaning of the curious phrase in *Verse 7*, "*He (God) sealeth up every man's hand,*" *i.e.*, brings all labour to a pause. For, as is his wont, Elihu sees the hand of God in all the vicissitudes of Nature and of human life. It is God who bids the snow fall, and the rain (*Verse 6*); God who summons the whirlwind from the secret place, the *penetralia*, the concealed and indiscoverable cave, or storehouse, in which He has pent it up; God who sends cold with his "cloud-scattering winds," and the frost which "binds the streams in bonds of ice," and so "straitens" or restrains their flow (*Verses 9, 10*). Nay, in this case, Elihu ventures not only to "scan the work" of God, but to "make it plain," to state the moral end God has in view in compelling men to pause from their toils by the wintry severities which silence the music of the streams and arrest the labours of the fields; it is that, at leisure from themselves and the common aims of life, and awed by these manifest tokens of his presence and

activity, they may "consider his handiwork" (*Verse 7*). And, no doubt, a new touch is added to the desolation of the wintry scene in *Verse 8*, and we are told how even the wild beasts are driven to their lairs and dens, in order that we may have a keener sense of its desolateness, and feel that man is left to stand in it alone, yet not alone, because face to face with God his Teacher.

Nay, more, in *Verses 11-13*, impelled perhaps by a fresh outbreak of the tempest, Elihu ventures even to define the moral significance of the thunderstorm, with its drenching tropical rain. It comes, he says, either as a scourge or as a benediction, to punish men for their sins or to reward and enrich them for their obedience.

A later and vastly inferior Arabian poet, Mohammed, supplies the best commentary on these Verses. In the Coran we read (*Sura lxvi. vv. 50-52*): It is the Lord who "sendeth the winds as the forerunner of his mercy (rain), and pure water send we down from heaven, *that we may revive by it a dead land*; . . . And we distribute it among them on all sides, *that they may reflect*: but most men refuse to be aught but thankless." And again (*Sura xxxii. v. 27*): "See they not how *we drive the rain to some parched land, and thereby bring forth corn*, of which their cattle and themselves do eat? *Will they not, then, behold?*" And again (*Sura xxxv. v. 10*): "*It is God who sendeth forth the winds which raise the clouds aloft, then drive them on to some land dead (from drought), and give life thereby to the earth after its death.* So shall be the resurrection." And once more (*Sura xxiv. v. 35*): "Hast thou not seen that *God driveth clouds lightly forward*, then gathereth them together, then pileth them in masses? And then thou seest the rain coming forth from their midst; and He causeth clouds, like mountains charged with hail, to descend from heaven; and *He maketh it to fall on whom He will, and from whom He will He turneth it aside.*"

With his usual artistic tact, the Poet has already in some measure prepared us, by the tone of Elihu's appeal, for the approaching Theophany. But now the preparation grows more obvious, the approximation of the two sections more marked; the transition is evidently close at hand. In *Verses 14-18* Elihu

takes the very tone in which Jehovah himself is about to speak ; and in Verses 19-24 he both takes and prescribes the very tone in which Job will respond to the Divine admonition and appeal : while yet, throughout the whole passage, we are made aware that the Storm, the fury of which we have just witnessed, is calming down and receding into the distance. The air is growing pure and fresh and warm as the wind veers to the sultry South (*Verse 17*) ; the earth is putting on a fresh face of joy after its tears ; the sky is resuming its tender brightness, nay, beginning to glow once more like a mirror of polished metal (*Verse 18*), its lustre enhanced by the gleaming lights of the clouds which fleck it (*Verse 15*), now that the tempest is over and the sun comes forth "in gold" to make the clouds, which concealed it for a while, the glasses and ministers of its pomp (*Verses 21, 22*).

It is easy, when once we have the clue, thus to pick out the phrases in which Elihu completes his description of the Storm, by depicting its subsidence and retreat, and shewing us how heaven and earth, after their fierce momentary strife, fling themselves into a still fonder embrace and glow with a more entrancing loveliness. But we should wholly fail to appreciate the power and beauty of this passage if we did not mark that we *have* to pick out these phrases, and piece them together, from what is virtually and intentionally an anticipation of the Theophany which is now to follow, and to crown, the Intervention of Elihu. The two processes, or aims, are subtly blended ; but the more obvious of them is not the former but the latter. For if we look at all closely at these last words of Elihu, we see at once that he is for a moment anticipating the challenge which Jehovah is about to utter ; that he is virtually saying to Job (*Verse 14*), as we shall soon hear Jehovah say :

Come forth into the light of things ;
Let Nature be your teacher.

He asks some of the very questions, or questions of the very same kind, and fraught with the selfsame intention. Know you how the clouds are poised, so delicately balanced in the air that they do not sink to earth, even when the very wind

before which they sail is shedding its soft penetrating warmth upon you (*Verses* 16, 17)? Can you explain this mystery which is at once so near to you and yet so far from you? Or know you how it is that the thin vaporous expanse of the firmament is yet so strong that it retains its form and beauty notwithstanding all the storms which rage through it, and shines forth with new lustre the instant they have passed by (*Verses* 18)? If not, if even these familiar marvels and mysteries lie beyond your reach, how should you comprehend, how affect or claim to comprehend, the more recondite mysteries of human life and of the Providence which orders it? You cannot see the way God takes with you, or the end He has in view? O, wait! wait patiently for Him, and you *shall* see. A breath from Him will clear all mysteries from your life, just as a wind from Him sweeps the darkness from the sky (*Verses* 21, 22), and suffuses it with streams of golden light. And, meantime, bow with reverence before the awful majesty of Him whom you cannot find out of yourself, and hold fast to the conviction that He whom you cannot comprehend is nevertheless just and good and kind (*Verse* 23).

All this is in the very tone of Jehovah when He looks out upon Job from the retreating tempest, and speaks to the man who has so long yearned for Him and listened for his voice. And if Elihu here speaks for Jehovah, he also speaks for Job. He sets him an example of reverence and humility. He himself takes toward God the very attitude he wants Job to take, and which Job is compelled to take when he hears Jehovah speak instead of hearing others speak of Him (Comp. Chaps. xl. 3, 4; xlii. 1-6). It is not simply that Elihu, through the whole passage, bows before the mysteries which Job resents, and on the sharp edges of which he rends and tears his heart. In *Verses* 19 and 20, and again in *Verses* 22 and 23, we have the words of one who feels that in the immediate Presence of God man must not dare to speak; one of a spirit so modest and reverential that he does not so much as expect to comprehend the ways of Him whom at the best we can but know in part, but is content to rely on his absolute wisdom and justice and love.

Nor is the final touch, the last sentence (*Verse 24*), of this admirable homily or discourse less admirable than the many pregnant sentences and noble images and thoughts which have preceded it. Job had set all his hopes on seeing God face to face, not suspecting what the vision of the Divine Majesty and Holiness must involve for sinful man beneath the sky. And the moment before that awful but long-desired vision breaks upon him, Elihu warns him that not even "the wise in heart" can endure to behold the God whom he has so often challenged to appear. The feeling and the significance of these final words are finely rendered in one of our most familiar hymns:

Eternal Light! Eternal Light!
How pure the soul must be,
When placed within thy searching sight,
It shrinks not, but, with calm delight,
Can live and look on Thee.

The whole *argument* of the Poem is now before us, for though, in the approaching theophany, Jehovah deigns to speak, He does not deign to argue. Probably the Poet felt that it would be an offence against good taste, a violation of all dramatic propriety, to put arguments into the mouth of the Almighty, and represent Him as bandying logic with his creatures. Still more probably he had himself passed through the deep spiritual struggle which he so nobly describes, and knew from his own experience that it is not by force of logic that the dark and trembling shadows of doubt are at last swept from the soul. What *can* be done by argument, moreover, he has already done, and done with a force and completeness of which even yet we may have but an imperfect conception. Charmed by the varied beauty or the sustained sublimity of those sections of the Poem we have already studied, we may have failed to bring together into a single and complete view the several arguments by which he has vindicated the ways of God with men. With his usual tact he puts all these arguments into the lips of men. We hear them from Elihu, from Job himself, or even from the Friends. And it will be worth while, I think, before we pass on to the

final section of the Poem and listen to Jehovah as He answers Job out of the tempest, to gather up these scattered and half-concealed arguments in a few brief sentences, that we may see how they sustain each other and run up into a consistent and comprehensive whole.

For one of these arguments we are indebted chiefly to the Friends. Their main contention was that, even here and now, it fares well with the good and goes ill with the wicked. And though they stated the fact somewhat too coarsely, and applied it much too universally and too peremptorily, yet who can deny that their statement contains a truth of the gravest importance when once it is detached—as in the course of their controversy with Job it is detached—from the bitter dogmatic exaggerations that turn it into a lie, and affords a very helpful clue to the mystery which encompasses our life? Elihu, again, makes a most valuable contribution to this great argument in his fundamental assumption, received, as he believes, by immediate inspiration from on high; viz., that the afflictions which men are called to endure, even when they are provoked by their own sins, are disciplinary and remedial in their intention rather than damnatory and punitive; a conviction which, so far as the practical conduct of life is concerned, goes far to solve the problem by which Job was perplexed. While Job himself, by his noble prevision of a judgment and a life to come, in which all the wrongs of time shall be redressed, and good shall come at last to all who have loved goodness and pursued it, throws the light of a great and most supporting hope into all the darknesses of earth and time.

If we weave these three lines of thought into a single argument, it may be doubted whether, even now that we hold the added thought and experience of some thirty centuries at our service, the most searching and inquisitive intellect can make any real addition to this ancient solution of the great problem of human life and thought. For when we have said that under the just and kindly providence of God good comes to the good and ill to the evil and unthankful; that the very sufferings imposed on men, whether they be the natural results of their own transgression or the strokes of a merciful and

fruitful discipline, are intended for their instruction, correction, and redemption; and that whatever wrongs are not remedied here shall be remedied hereafter, and whatever undeserved sufferings produce no present fruit of happiness shall bear a richer harvest in the world to come; when we have said all this, what more or better has even the wisest of us to say?

SECTION VIII.
THE THEOPHANY.

CHAPTERS XXXVIII.—XLII. 6.

AT last the invisible Opponent who stood behind Job's visible antagonists,¹ and who had remained obstinately dumb to challenge, invective, expostulation, entreaty, opens his mouth and answers him out of the tempest which Elihu has so graphically described. *And what does He say?* The answer to that question has astonished and perplexed every candid and thoughtful student of this great Poem. For when *God* deigns to speak, we expect to be satisfied, if not convinced; when *He* replies, we expect his answer to be final, conclusive, complete. And yet his reply to Job is no reply. He does not answer one of the questions Job has asked, nor solve one of the problems he has started. So far as logic is concerned, or a real penetrative insight into the mysteries of Providence and of human life, we learn far more from Elihu, from Job himself, and even from the very Friends, than from the Maker and Teacher of them all.²

Driven from the peace of faith by the stings and scourges of calamity, Job passes through all the agonies of doubt and fear, of wounded trust and love. In his agony he gives the most varied and impressive expression to the fluctuating passions of a heart torn from its rest, to the questions which we all ask in our turn but cannot answer, to the great moral problems which we all start but cannot solve, when we are brought face to face with the mysteries which at once darken and ennoble our lives. His friends give him no help, but

¹ See *introduction* to Chapters iv.—xiv., pp. 73, 74.

² See pp. 486–488.

simply aggravate the burden of his grief by "darkening counsel with words devoid of wisdom." Even Elihu has only a little help to give, although to him it is a most wonderful and healing thought that the afflictions of men are not necessarily punitive, but may be disciplinary and remedial. Yet even he has no adequate reply to the deep and awful problems in which the spirit of Job is entangled, and against which it beats and bruises itself in vain. *He* is not the Light, but has only come to bear witness to the Light:¹ *he* cannot justify the ways of God with men: he can only prepare the way for the Lord who, Himself, is coming to end and crown the argument.

As Elihu's eloquent Discourse draws to a close, our hearts grow full of expectation and hope. The mighty tempest in which Jehovah shrouds Himself sweeps up through the darkened heaven; it draws nearer and nearer; we are blinded by the "flash which He flings to the ends of the earth:" our hearts "throb and leap out of their place,"² and we say, "God is about to speak, and there will be light." But God speaks, and, lo, there is no light. He does not so much as touch the intellectual problems over which we have been brooding so long, much less, as we hoped, sweep them beyond the farthest horizon of our thoughts. He simply overwhelms us with his Majesty. He causes his "glory" to pass before us, and though, after he has seen this great sight, Job's face shines with a reflected lustre which has to be veiled from us under the mere forms of a recovered and augmented prosperity, we are none the brighter for it. He claims to have all power in heaven and on earth, to be Lord of all the wonders of the day and of the night, of tempest and of calm. He simply asserts what no one has denied, that all the processes of Nature and all the changes of Providence are his handiwork; that it is He who calleth forth the stars and determines their influence on the earth, He who sendeth rain and fruitful seasons, He who provides food for bird and beast, arms them

¹ More than one of the best Commentators suggest this relation of Elihu to Jehovah, and hold that he was but the *Baptist* to that great Redeemer, the Messenger sent before to announce his advent and to prepare his way.

² Chapter xxxvii. Verses 1-5.

with strength, clothes them with beauty, and quickens in them the manifold wise instincts by which they are preserved and multiplied. He does not utter a single word to relieve the mysteries of his rule, to explain why the good suffer and the wicked flourish, why He permits our hearts to be so often and so cruelly torn by agonies of bereavement, of misgiving, of doubt. When the majestic Voice ceases we are no nearer than before to a solution of the haunting problems of life. We can only wonder that Job should sink in utter love and self-abasement before Him; we can only ask, in accents of unfeigned surprise—and it is well with us if some tone of contempt do not blend with our surprise: “*What* is there in all this to shed calm, and order, and an invincible faith into his perturbed and doubting spirit?” We say: “This pathetic Poem is a logical failure after all; it does not carry its theme to any satisfactory conclusion, nor to *any* conclusion: it suggests doubts to which it furnishes no reply, problems which it does not even attempt to solve: charmed with its beauty we may be, but we are none the wiser for our patient study of its argument.”

Now that would be a sorry conclusion of our labour. And before we resign ourselves to it, let us at least ask:—

1. Is it so certain as we sometimes assume it to be that this Poem was *intended* to explain the mystery of human life? Is it even certain that a logical explanation of that mystery is either *possible* or *desirable* to creatures such as we are in such a world as this?

It is surely a significant fact that *all* the books which handle the theme of “Job,” even now that the true Light has come into the world, are equally unsatisfactory and disappointing to the logical intellect. From the *Confessions* of St. Augustine down to Dr. Newman’s *History of My Religious Opinions*, there have been hundreds of books which have professed to give the history of an inquisitive human spirit, sounding its dim and perilous way across dark seas of Doubt to the clear rest and haven of Faith; but read which of these books we may, we observe in it two singular phenomena. First, so long as the author sets forth the doubts and perplexities by which he has been exercised, we find his words

instinct with life, and passion, and power: they commend themselves to our understanding and excite our sympathy; we feel that he is happily expressing thoughts and emotions which have often stirred within our own souls. But—and this is the second and more striking phenomenon—no sooner does he begin to tell us what it was that solved and conquered his doubts, to describe the several steps by which he climbed back to faith, to explain how much wider, and purer, and firmer his faith is for the trial through which it has passed; no sooner does he enter on this climax of his work than—unless indeed we have gone through an experience similar to his—a thick bewildering haze settles down on his words; we read them, but they are no longer instinct with life and force; they neither commend themselves to our sympathies nor convince our judgment. We cry in disappointment: “Is that *all*? What was there *in that* to induce faith? The man has not fairly met one of his doubts, nor solved one of his problems; he has simply evaded them, and crept, by an illogical bye-path, to a most lame and impotent conclusion.”

No man who, “perplexed in faith,” has read books of this kind, hoping to find in them aids to faith and answers to doubt, can be an entire stranger to this feeling of disappointment and defeated hope. Written, as such books often are, by men as able as they are good, there is no one of them which, if I may judge from a wide experience of them, does not disappoint the reader just as the Book of Job disappoints him. They may command our admiration; they may touch our hearts; but they do not satisfy our reason or refute our doubts; they fail at the very point at which we are most anxious for their success.

And this fact should surely teach us that the path of logic is not commonly the path to faith. It should lead us to ask whether it may not be impossible to solve, in human words and for the human intellect, the deep mysteries over which, nevertheless, our minds and hearts *will* brood and fret; nay, whether, if it were possible, it would not be undesirable. Logic can do much, but it cannot do all. It may convince the reason, but it cannot bend the will or change the heart. “*With the heart man believeth unto righteousness;*” and logic

does not address itself to the heart. It is doubtful whether the human intellect, at least while it has no ampler and more flexible organ than the brain, can so comprehend the ways of Him who is infinite as to demonstrate their equity and kindness, or even comprehend the proof, if proof were to be had; but it is very certain that, were such a demonstration well within our reach, we might still distrust his goodness, or even hate it when it thwarted or pained us.

If proof were possible, if God could inspire or man could indite an argument which should once for all interpret our life to us, solve all its problems, dispel all its mystery, it is still open to doubt whether it would be well that we should have it. For the mystery which encompasses us on every side is an educational force of the utmost value. We fret against it, indeed, and strive to be quit of it; and it is well that we do; for it is this very strife and fret by which we are strengthened, by which our character is developed, and we are compelled to look up to Heaven in trust and hope. If we no longer had any questions to ask, any problems to solve, if we saw the full meaning and final purpose of God's dealings with us, we should lose more than we should gain. With certainty we might be content; and we might *rust* in our content. But with mystery within us and on every side of us, compelling us to ask, "What does this mean? and that? and, above all, what does *God* mean by it all?" we lose the rest of content to gain a strife of thought which trains and educates us, which impels us onward and upward, and for which, in the end, we shall be all the wiser and better and happier. It may be, it surely is, inevitable that, with an infinite God above us and around us and within us, we should be encompassed by mysteries we cannot fathom; that, if the mysteries which now perplex us were removed, they would only give place to mysteries still more profound. Even logic suggests so much as that. But, quite apart from speculation, here stands the fact—that it is obviously part of the Divine scheme of training for us that evil and pain should be in the world, that they should excite in us questions we should not otherwise have asked, and endeavours after knowledge and holiness and freedom we should not otherwise have made. And God is

wise. His scheme for us is likely to be better than any we could frame for ourselves. But if it be, as it would seem to be, his scheme to educate us by the mysteries around us, and the questions and endeavours these mysteries excite, He can give us no book, no argument, no revelation which would dispel these mysteries; the craving intellect *must* be left unsatisfied in order that faith and inquiry may have free scope and do their work of discipline upon us.

What is it that kindles and trains the intelligence of children, that chastens their will and develops their moral qualities and powers? Is it not that a mysterious world lies all around them—a world in which things seem to be different from what they are, and hold out another promise to that which they fulfil? is it not *this* which for ever sets them on asking questions which we can very hardly answer, and wondering over marvels which we perhaps have ceased to admire? Is it not the uncertainty as to what the next moment may bring, or teach, which makes their eyes bright with expectation and with hope? Is it not because *we* often say and do that which they cannot comprehend, and even that which pains and disappoints and perplexes them,—is it not this which braces and enlarges their character and makes room in them for faith and trust and love? If we could condense all the wisdom of the world and of life into a tiny manual which they could master in their earliest years, should we venture to place it in their hands? If we did, we should simply rob them of their youth, of their keen enjoyment of the mysteries, the changes and surprises, of life; imperfectly and by rote they would acquire what they now learn so much more truly and thoroughly and happily by experience and by efforts which strengthen and develop them.

God teaches us—Jehovah taught Job—as we teach children—by the mystery of life, by its illusions and contradictions, by its intermixtures of evil with good, of sorrow with joy; by the questions we are compelled to ask even though we cannot answer them, by the problems we are compelled to study although we cannot solve them. And is not his way the best way?

2. But, if the “answer” of Jehovah disappoints us, it

satisfied Job; and not only satisfied him, but swept away all his doubts and fears in a transport of gratitude and renewed love: and we must now endeavour to see how and why it was that an answer which answered nothing produced what seems to us so astonishing and disproportionate an effect on him.

In our study of Holy Writ we often *make* the difficulties by which we are perplexed, and look for solutions of them everywhere but straight before our eyes. When, for example, we read that "Jehovah answered Job out of the tempest," we forthwith ask, "And what did He say?" expecting to hear some conclusive argument that will pour the light of an eternal Wisdom on the mysteries of human life; and thus we overlook the immense force and pathos of the fact *that Jehovah spake to Job at all*. And yet, so soon as we open our eyes on this simple and obvious fact, it is easy to believe that, even if Job had not understood a single word of the Divine remonstrance, the mere assurance that Jehovah was speaking to him would excite a rush of sacred emotion, before which all recollection of his misgivings and miseries would be carried away as with a flood. For it was *this* which he had craved throughout. Again and again, in an endless variety of forms, he had cried, "O that God would meet me! O that He would speak to me! O that He would fix a day, however distant, in which I might come before Him and plead my cause! O that He would even appear to question and to judge me!"¹ The pain at the very heart of his pain was not that he had to suffer; but that, in his sufferings, God had forgotten or abandoned him. He could bear that God should "take" the children He had given. He could bear to receive "evil" at the Hand from which he had received such various stores of good. He could even bear that his "friends" should turn upon him and rend him with their cruel assumptions and baseless suspicions. What he could not bear was that *God* should abandon him, *abandon* as well as afflict him; that when he cried for pity or redress there should be none in

¹ Chap. ix. 32-35; Chap. xiii. 3, 22-28; Chap. xiv. 13-15; Chap. xvi. 19-22; Chap. xix. 23-27; Chap. xxiii. 2-9; Chap. xxix. 2-5; Chap. xxx. 20-26.

heaven itself to answer or regard him. In vain did Elihu affirm¹ that God was not alienated or indifferent, though He had not yet appeared to deliver his verdict on the strife, so much more bitter and terrible than that outward controversy with his Friends, which was making havoc in Job's heart. Until it was proclaimed by a voice which he felt to be from Heaven, how, indeed, could Job believe that even when he sighed out, "I shall never see Him!" his cause was before God, that God was only waiting to pronounce his sentence until He could make it a favourable sentence and Job was fully prepared to hear it? His heart was breaking under the cruel pang of *desertion*: and his cry, like that of One greater than he, was "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

And if now, through the tempest and the darkness, there should sound a Voice from heaven; if, however it came, the conviction should come to him that the God he could not find had found him, and was speaking to him, would it very much matter what God said? Would it not be enough that it was *God* who was speaking, that his Divine Friend had come back to him, and come back to assure him that He had never forgotten or abandoned him? Would it not be enough to feel that *He* was in the very tempest which had struck him to the earth, that He had listened to him even when He did not answer him, loved him even when He smote him, and had even been afflicted in all his afflictions? It was this—O, it was *this*—which dropped like balm into his torn and wounded heart. It was the resurrection of faith and hope and love in the rekindled sense of the Divine Presence and favour which raised Job into a life in which doubt and fear had no place, into a joy on which even repentance was no stain. Not what God said, but that God spoke to him and had come to him—it was this which cast him into the dust, which liberated in him the humility which is man's truest exaltation, and which constrained from him the happiest words he utters, although they sound so sad—

I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear,
But now mine eye hath seen Thee:

¹ Chap. xxxv. 14-16.

Wherefore I retract and repent
In dust and ashes.

And, surely, it is this same sense of an auspicious Divine Presence, that comes we know not how, though by happy experience we do know both "whence it cometh and whither it goeth," before which *all* the darknesses of doubt flee away. It is an experience which lies beyond the scope of language. No man who has passed through it can explain it, or even adequately express it in words, since words are incapable of fully rendering any of our deepest emotions. All we can say of it is, that it is not produced by logic, by argument, by answers nicely adapted to questions we have asked, or to the doubts over which we have brooded—as, indeed, what master passion of the soul is thus produced? and that, as it did not spring from logic, so neither can it be expressed in logical forms. It is too deep for words to reach, too subtle and spiritual for words to hold. When any man can tell what love is, and what it is that kindles a supreme human affection in his soul, he may with some reason demand that we should tell him what faith is, and how we gain or recover our faith in God: but not till then. "Love laughs at logic:" and if love for man or woman, why not love for God? And hence our Poet is never more true to human experience than when he makes the answer of Jehovah no answer to the logical and inquisitive intellect.

3. Still the question recurs: *What* was it that recovered Job to faith and trust and peace? Was there absolutely *nothing* in the answer of Jehovah out of the tempest to meet the inquest of his beseeching doubts?

Well, yes, there was something, but not much, I think. There *is* an argument in the Divine Answer which may be reproduced in logical forms, though it is only an argument of hints and suggestions. It does not touch the profounder questions which Job had raised, nor would it be difficult to pick holes in it were we to take it simply as addressed to the sceptical intellect. It does not go very deep at the best. It is addressed to the heart rather than to the brain, to the faith which lived in Job's doubts rather than to the doubts which clouded his faith. It would not convince a sceptic, however

reasonable and honest he might be. Nothing would convince him except that sense of a Divine Presence and Goodness which, as we have seen, swept all Job's misgivings clean out of his heart; and this no argument can convey.

Nevertheless we must mark and accentuate the lines of argument which, as all critics are agreed, are involved in this Answer, though they are not very apparent.¹ Viewed simply as an argument, then, it met that painful sense of mystery which oppressed Job as he sat solitary and alone among his Friends, all the more alone because they were with him. One and a chief element in his pain was that he could not make out what God was driving at, that he could see no good reason why a good man should be saddened by loss and misery, and a bad man live out all his days in mirth and affluence. And this is a pain we have all felt in our turn and of which we should all be very gladly rid. The injustice, the inequalities, the pains and degradations which enter into the human lot perplex and afflict us; we can see no good reason for them; we cannot vindicate them, whether to ourselves or to others.

Does Jehovah, then, when He answers Job, answer the questions which this spectacle of human misery suggests? Does He furnish us with a good and adequate reason for the inequalities of the human lot? He does nothing of the kind. He does not lift an iota from that painful mystery. He simply

¹ Reuss states this Divine Argument not without some insight, yet surely in a very hard and brusque way. As he takes it, it comes to this. In the First Remonstrance (Chap. xxxviii. 2—Chap. xxxix. 30) Jehovah virtually demands: "Thou who assumest to judge me, the invisible Ruler of the universe, canst thou so much as solve the problems and mysteries of the visible world?" and seeks to draw from Job a confession of ignorance in the presence of fathomless Wisdom. In the Second Remonstrance (Chap. xl. 7—Chap. xli. 34) He demands: "Wilt *thou* take the reins, thou who art crushed by the first strokes of my rod, and govern the world in my stead?" and seeks to draw from Job an avowal of powerlessness in the presence of boundless Might—powerless even in the presence of mere brutes, such as Behemoth and Leviathan, *which is infinitely more humiliating*. I do not apprehend that to *humiliate* Job was even part of the Divine aim; but, rather, that that aim was to *elevate* him by quickening in him humility and trust. And hence, in the text, while seeking to preserve all that is of worth in Reuss's statement of the Divine Argument, I have tried to give it a truer and more gracious turn.

assures Job, and us, that we should not let that mystery pain and perplex us, and hints that it may have both a nobler motive and a higher end than as yet we can conceive. In short, the argument of the Divine Answer is Butler's argument—the argument *from analogy*. To the perplexed and stricken Patriarch, who sits brooding sorrowfully over the dark problems of human life and fate, Jehovah points out that equally insoluble mysteries are over his head and under his feet; that he lives and moves, and has his being among them; that, turn where he may, look where he will, he cannot escape them; and that, as he finds them everywhere else, he should expect to find them in his own being and in the destiny of man. Briefly put, put simply as an argument, the Divine Answer runs thus: "You fret and despair over the single mystery which has been forced home upon you by pangs of sorrow and loss; you are perturbed, shaken to the very heart, because you cannot master and interpret it. But, see, there are mysteries everywhere; the whole universe stands thick with them. Can you interpret *these*, you who assume that you ought to be able to interpret *that*? Can you explain the creation of the world, the separation of sky and earth, land and sea, and the interwoven influences of the one on the other?¹ Have you mastered the secrets of the light and the darkness, of wind and rain, of snow and ice, of the migrations of the birds of the air, of the structure and instincts of the beasts of the river and the field?² Yet, instead of fretting against these mysteries, you accept and profit by them. You *use* sea and land, day and night, wind and rain, birds and beasts, and make them serve your turn. You live content amid a thousand other problems you cannot solve, and even turn them to account. Should you not look, then, to find mysteries in the creature whom I have set over all the works of my hands—in man, and in his lot? Will it not be wise of you to use your life rather than to brood over it, to turn your lot, with all its changes and surprises, to the best account, rather than to fret over the problems it suggests?"

A second argument may be hinted at, implied rather than

¹ Chap. xxxviii. 2-18, 31-36.

² Chap. xxxviii. 19-30, 39-41; Chap. xxxix. 1-30; Chaps. xl. 15-xli. 34.

stated, meant for us perhaps rather than Job, in the Divine Answer. By his sublime description of the heavens, and the earth, and all that in them is, Jehovah may have meant to suggest to Job: "*Consider* these mysteries and parables of Nature, and what they reveal of the character and purpose of Him by whom they were created and made. You cannot adequately interpret any one of them; but you can see that they all work together for good. You cannot tell how the world was made, how the firm earth and flowing seas were formed; but you can see that the earth yields you her fruits, and that the sea carries your ships and brings you the wealth of distant lands. You cannot command the wind or the clouds that bring rain; but you can see that the winds carry health and the rains fertility wherever they go. You cannot explain the migratory instinct of the travelling birds; but you can see that God feeds and fosters them by the instinct which drives them from shore to shore. The world around you is full of mysteries which you cannot solve; but, so far as you can judge, is not the end they subserve a beneficent end? And if the world within you also has mysteries which you cannot fathom, cannot you trust that somehow, here or hereafter, these too will reach a final goal of good? The mystery of human life, the mystery of human pain—may not these be at least as beneficent as you admit the marvels and mysteries of the natural world to be?"

This, I take it, is the argument of the Divine Answer in so far as it was an argument; and even this is only suggested, not explicitly stated. It does not go very deep. It does not solve the problems over which we brood; it only points us to other problems equally difficult, equally insoluble. It does not even affirm, it does but hint, that the end of all these mysteries may be a good end, an end of mercy and grace. We are not told—much as we long to know it—why God permits evil to exist, or why He permits it to take so many painful and apparently injurious forms even for the righteous. We are simply invited to *trust* the God whom we have found to be good so far as we can understand his ways, and to believe that out of evil itself He will educe a larger and more abiding good.

God does not argue with us, nor seek to force our trust; for no man was ever yet *argued* into love, or could even compel his own child to love and confide in him. Trust and love are not to be forced, but won. All we can do even for the child that we love best is to surround him with a large, pure atmosphere of kindness, to shew him that we are worthy of his confidence and affection. When we have done our utmost, he may abuse our confidence, and repay our kindness with a thoughtless ingratitude. It may be necessary that he should leave even the happiest home and go out into a cold and selfish world before he will learn to value our tenderness and respond with love to the love that has so long been seeking him. And God may have to deal with us as we with our children. In his wisdom and kindness He may send us out to meet the cold blasts of adversity, or suffer us to serve the passions which, while promising liberty and enjoyment, fetter and degrade the soul. And when we have spent all and are in want, the "famine" comes, or the "tempest" sweeps through our darkened heavens, through our darkened hearts, strewn them with wrecks. And *now*, if the kind, tender Voice speaks to us out of the tempest with unaltered and unalterable affection, or its music be heard through the harsh discords of famine and want; if the conviction comes to us that there is a Friend, a Father in heaven who loves us despite our manifold offences, our love springs up to meet his love. We wait for no arguments; we ask for no proofs. It is enough that our Father speaks to us once more, that He loves us still, that He rejoices over us as we bow in shame and penitence before Him. Not by logical arguments which convince our reason, but by tender appeals which touch and break our hearts, our Father conquers us at last, and wins our love and trust for ever.

4. There are, of course, many other forces at work in this Answer, all conspiring to the same end of grace—Job's redemption from the perplexities and misgivings by which he was enthralled. Most of these the student must be left to discover and formulate for himself; but there are two of them which, since they meet wants and answer to convictions of our own time, may be briefly pointed out.

(a) The first is that the Hebrew Poet forestalled the secret of Wordsworth—anticipated the very invitation which our own poet has addressed to the men of the present century. I have sometimes thought that all that was special and peculiar to Wordsworth might be gathered from one of his shortest pieces, "The Tables Turned." For it seems to have been his great task to bear an invitation to men vexed with the strife of thought and weary with the "toil and trouble" of anxious speculation to "leave their books" and come forth into "the light of things," "let Nature be their teacher," and to bring to "her world of ready wealth" "a heart that watches and receives." He would have them find, as he himself had found, in "the sweet music of the woodland linnet," or in the clear full tones of "the blithe throstle," more of wisdom, more of that "sweet lore which Nature brings" than in all the "barren leaves" of cloistral study and speculation. He held, and would have them hold, that

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach us more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.

And it is precisely in this spirit that the Hebrew Poet represents Jehovah as calling Job forth from the dreary waste of brooding speculation, where he was wandering "in endless mazes lost," into the wholesome world of Nature: as summoning him to watch the ways of the lion and the raven, the rock-goat and the wild ass, the bison and the ostrich; and "'mid all the mighty sum of things for ever speaking" to learn a higher and a more healthy wisdom than he can gain by brooding over his own heart and its wounds. In short, he would have him find in the serenity of Nature a rebuke to his own perturbation of spirit, and in its majesty a keener sense of his own feebleness and of the close restrictions under which it worked.

(β) The other is that Jehovah is represented as calling Job away from the personal to the impersonal—another most healthy transition—from an eternal brooding over the narrow circle of his own sorrowful experience into the broad world of universal experience and life. Job had been painfully

awakened, as men commonly are awakened, to the force of certain facts with which he was quite familiar before the "fence round all that he had" was broken down, but which in his untroubled prosperity he had forgotten, or overlooked, or had at least failed to bring into vital contact with his beliefs; these he could no longer ignore, or glide over without any real sense of their bearing, when once they had invaded his own life and laid it waste. Many a good man, as he knew very well, had suffered the most cruel losses, or endured utterly unprovoked agonies of want and shame, before he himself was struck down from the top of happy days: and he had seen, as he confesses, many a wicked man happy in a prosperous and honoured life, happy too in a sudden painless death, while he still held, or professed to hold, that under the righteous rule of God only the good could prosper, and all who did wickedly were put to the ban.¹ With the strange self-convicting inconsistency which we may see in good men every day, he had been content to hold a creed daily contradicted by the most patent facts, and which, as we have heard him acknowledge again and again, he felt to be contradicted by these facts the very moment he was compelled to reflect on them.

It was well for him, then, that he should be awakened from his easy self-complacent dream, however rudely; that he should be shaken from his narrow inadequate creed and compelled to wider truer thoughts of God and of the moral complexities of his rule even by being touched, and touched to the very quick, first in all that he had, and then in his own "bone and flesh:" just as it is well that we should be compelled, even by shocks of loss and change and pain, to leave squaring our guess by the mere shows of things, or by facts carefully selected to fit our theory, and to bring our thoughts into accord with the hard but beneficent realities of life, and with as many of them as we can grasp. But it would not have been well that Job, when once he was thoroughly awakened, should have been left to brood for ever over the new set of facts, the meaning and force of which he had been constrained to recognize: to brood over any one set of facts,

¹ Chap. xii. 4-6; xxi. 5-21; xxiv. 1-25.

however carefully they have been selected, however keenly pressed home, can only lead man astray, and confirm him in his habit of dropping from his thoughts whatever he cannot conveniently carry. God's aim for Job would not have been reached if, having learned from his own sufferings how much and how keenly even the righteous may suffer, he had continued to dwell exclusively on the facts of suffering and the problems they suggest, going round and round in the same dreary circle of meditation, and finding no outlet from it, instead of being quickened to a larger sense of the mystery of life and truer wider thoughts of the Providence which was leading him through suffering to a purer and more enduring joy. God had cast him down only to raise him up, to establish him on a higher ground of vantage, from which he might contemplate his own life and the life of man with other, larger, and sincerer eyes. And hence He who had called him to reflect by the penetrating ministry of suffering and loss, now calls him away from the narrow weary round of his personal experience toward the large and high conclusions of faith and trust and charity on which it was his purpose from the first to establish him.

This, indeed, is one and a chief end for which God afflicts us all. Every affliction brings us a message from Him, a summons to wider and less inadequate thoughts of Him and of our relation to Him, and of the great end of mercy which He has in view both for the individual man and for the world at large. And it is only as we listen to this message, and respond to it, that we get the real good and reach the real end of the things which we suffer, and find our winter change to spring.

5. There is still one point raised by the Theophany on which, for the sake of certain prosaic readers of this Poem, it may be necessary to touch. For it is only too certain that in some minds the question will be raised: "But did God speak all these words, *in an audible voice*, out of a tempestuous sky, to Job and his Friends as they sat, drenched with tropical rain, on the *mezbele*?" And to such a question how can one reply except with a gentle reminder that it is a poem we are studying, not a chronicle? A big voice out of a black sky

is not, therefore, a necessary assumption. The poem is probably founded on historical facts, indeed; and there may be some veritable fact in the experience of the historic Job behind the sentence, "Then Jehovah answered Job out of the tempest." When his mind was prepared for a Divine intervention by the wise and friendly words of Elihu, a great tempest may have forced it away from his personal interests and from the fierce polemic with the Friends—and these great convulsions of Nature are very potent in suddenly dwarfing all personal interests and hushing all strifes—to thoughts of the unfathomable power and majesty of God, and the folly of striving with Him. A storm may have set him thinking, and thinking in a new and healthier direction. Or the "tempest" in his own soul may have sufficed to prepare him for thoughts such as those to which the Poet here gives expression.

But what, after all, have we to do with all this? Nothing is more futile, in dealing with any great work of imagination, than the endeavour to separate the real from the ideal, to look through the flowing outlines and rich tender colours to the dry bones of fact which lie beyond and within them? It is enough, or should be enough, for us to know that, in his heart at least, Job heard a Divine voice remonstrating with him, appealing to him. However he may have reached it, we may at least be quite sure that the Poet did reach the conviction that in this Answer there are truths of a force and potency to end and crown the long strife of thought through which he has conducted us; and that he received these truths, since they were high beyond his unassisted reach, by direct inspiration from Heaven. And what need we know, or ask, beyond this?

6. In point of form the Theophany divides itself into a First Divine Remonstrance, extending from Chapter xxxviii. Verse 2, to Chapter xxxix. Verse 30, or to Chapter xl. Verse 5, if we include Job's response to it; and a Second Divine Remonstrance, conducted on the same lines as the First, extending from Chapter xl. Verse 7, to Chapter xli. Verse 34, or, including Job's response, to Chapter xlii. Verse 6.

FIRST DIVINE REMONSTRANCE.

CHAPTERS XXXVIII. 1—XL. 5.

WHEN the Majesty of Heaven appears to his afflicted servant, He is very far from doing that which Job had demanded and expected of Him ; but, if He does other, He does better than it had entered the heart of Job to conceive. He transcends, instead of following, the anticipated lines of action. In asserting his own righteousness Job had impeached the righteousness of God. He had challenged his Judge to try him, to put him to the proof. And he had expected, as we learn from Chapter xiii. Verse 22,¹ that, if God responded to his challenge, He would accuse and question him, or that He would suffer Job to question *Him*, and to set Him on justifying his ways. In the blindness of his grief and passion, in short, Job was wholly occupied with himself, as in similar conditions we are all apt to be, and conceived of God as having nothing else to do than to vindicate Himself to him, and to solve the problems by which he was oppressed. But when Jehovah appears and speaks, He makes no attempt to vindicate Himself; He offers no solution of the problems with which Job had wearied himself in vain. He is Himself the solution of them. Not by what He says, but by manifesting Himself as He is, He reaches and satisfies the heart of Job—as indeed He satisfies us all, if only we can see Him when He appears and hear Him when He speaks to us.

He opens his First Remonstrance with a single upbraiding sentence (Chap. xxxviii. 2), in which He affirms Job to be altogether on the wrong tack ; and then proceeds at once to cause “all his glory”—which means all his goodness—to pass before his face. And as Job listens to the sublime descant in which the Maker of all things discloses the splendours of his loving-kindness no less than of his power as manifested in earth and sky, in land and sea, in calm and storm, in light and darkness, in the grass of the field, in bird and beast (Chaps. xxxviii. 4—xxxix. 30), he *sees* Him ; *i.e.*, he comes to

¹ See also Chap. xxiv. 1, *et seq.*

know both God and himself far more truly and deeply than he had ever done before. He is amazed at his own temerity in having challenged a Power and a Righteousness beyond the reach of his thought; in place of any longer insisting on his own unimpeachable integrity, he confesses that he is "vile:" and he casts from him the doubts, born of ignorance and wounded self-love, over which he had brooded so long, although they are still unresolved; or, rather, he lets them drop as no longer worth a moment's thought now that he sees God face to face (Chap. xl. 1-5).

At no point is our Poet truer to experience and the facts of human life than here. For, in our hours of pain and doubt and misgiving, the apparent difficulties round which our thoughts circle in endless flight are seldom our real difficulties. When we most earnestly crave a solution for the questions which baffle our intellect, what we really need after all is not so much an answer to these questions as a new and larger experience, a gracious and sacred emotion, which will carry us clean out of the intellectual arena, all choked with dust of our own making, into the pure upper air which is all suffused with a Divine Love, and which will quicken in us, or intensify a sense of the Love which watches over us, a Love that does not "alter where it alteration finds," but shines on for ever, and is "the star to every wandering bark." And very often we, like Job, are led to the assurance that "the good God loveth us" through the conviction that "He made and loveth all."

CHAPTERS XXXVIII.-XL.

CHAP. XXXVIII. *Then Jehovah answered Job out of the tempest and said :*

2. *Who is this that darkeneth counsel
By words devoid of knowledge ?*
3. *Gird up thy loins, now, like a man ;
I will question thee, and answer thou me.*
4. *Where wast thou when I founded the earth ?
Say, if thou art of skill in understanding !*
5. *Who fixed its measures—if thou knowest,
Or who stretched out a line upon it ?*
6. *On what were its foundations sunk,*

- Or who laid its corner-stone,
 7. When the stars of morning sang in concert,
 And all the Sons of God shouted for joy ?
 8. Or who shut in the sea with doors
 When it burst forth from the womb ;
 9. When I made the clouds the garments thereof,
 And thick mists its swaddling clothes ;
 10. When I measured my bound for it,
 And set bars and gates,
 11. And said, " Thus far shalt thou come, but no farther,
 And here shall the pride of thy waves be stayed " ?
 12. Hast thou ever commanded that it be morning,
 And caused the dawn to know its place,
 13. That it should seize hold upon the skirts of the earth,
 And shake the wicked out of it ?
 14. She is changed like clay under a signet,
 And [all things] stand out as in gay attire ;
 15. But the light is withholden from the wicked,
 And the uplifted arm is broken.
 16. Hast thou gone down to the fountains of the sea,
 Or traversed the recesses of the deep ?
 17. Have the gates of death been opened unto thee,
 Or hast thou seen the portals of the realm of shades ?
 18. Hast thou surveyed the breadths of the earth ?
 Say, if thou knowest it all !
 19. Which is the path to the abode of light,
 And the darkness—where is its dwelling ?
 20. For [doubtless] thou didst lead it to its place,
 And art acquainted with the path to its abode !
 21. Thou knowest it, for thou wast then born,
 And vast is the number of thy days !
 22. Hast thou entered the storehouse of the snow,
 And seen the arsenals of the hail,
 23. Which I reserve for the time of trouble,
 For the day of conflict and of war ?
 24. How is the light distributed,
 And the East wind scattered over the earth ?
 25. Who hath cleft a channel for the rain-torrent,
 Or a track for the flash of thunder,
 26. That it may rain on an unpeopled land,
 On a desert where no man is,
 27. To saturate the wilds and wastes,
 And to make the pastures put forth their herbage ?
 28. Hath the rain a father ?

- Or who begat the dewdrops ?*
29. *From whose womb came forth the ice,*
 And the hoarfrost of heaven—who hath engendered it,
30. *That the waters should be hardened as into stone,*
 And the surface of the deep cohere ?
31. *Canst thou fasten the links of the Cluster ;*
 Canst thou unloose the fetters of the Giant ?
32. *Canst thou bring forth the Constellations in their season ?*
 The Bear and her offspring—canst thou guide them ?
33. *Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven ?*
 Canst thou determine their influence upon the earth ?
34. *Canst thou lift thy voice to the clouds,*
 That an abundance of waters may overhang thee ?
35. *Canst thou send forth the lightnings so that they go,*
 Or will they say to thee, “ We are here ! ”
36. *Who hath put [this] wisdom into thy reins,*
 Or who hath given [such] understanding to thine heart ?
37. *Who by wisdom can count the clouds,*
 Or slant the bottles of heaven,
38. *As when the dust cakes into mire,*
 And clod cleaveth fast to clod ?
39. *Wilt thou hunt prey for the Lion,*
 Or still the craving of his whelps,
40. *When they crouch in their dens,*
 And lie in ambush under the covert ?
41. *Who provideth his prey for the Raven,*
 When his young cry unto God
 And wander for lack of food ?

CHAP. XXXIX. *Knowest thou the time when the Rock-Goats bear ?*

- Hast thou marked the travailing of the roes ?*
2. *Canst thou number the months which they fulfil ?*
 And knowest thou the time when they bring forth,
3. *When they bow them down and give birth to their young*
 And cast out their throes ?
4. *Their young grow big and hale in the plain,*
 They go forth and do not return.
5. *Who sent out the Wild-Ass free,*
 And who loosed the Wanderer's bands,
6. *Whose home I have made in the wilderness,*
 And in the salt waste his haunt ?
7. *He scorneth the din of the city,*

8. *And heedeth no driver's cry ;
The range of the mountains is his pasture ;
And he searcheth after all that is green.*
9. *Will the Bison be willing to serve thee ?
Will he lodge by night in thy stall ?*
10. *Canst thou tether the Bison to the furrow by a trace ?
Will he harrow the valleys, following after thee ?*
11. *Will thou trust him because his strength is great ?
Or wilt thou leave thy labour to him ?*
12. *Wilt thou trust him to bring home thy grain,
And gather it into thy garner ?*
13. *The wing of the Ostrich waveth proudly ;
But hath she the pinion and plumage of the pious stork ?*
14. *Nay, for she abandoneth her eggs to the earth,
And hatcheth them in the sand,*
15. *Forgetting that the foot may trample them,
Or that the beast of the field may crush them ;*
16. *Harsh is she to her young, as though they were not her own,
Careless that her travail should be in vain :*
17. *For God hath denied her wisdom,
And hath not meted out understanding to her ;*
18. *But what time she lasheth herself to flight
She laughs at the horse and his rider.*
19. *Dost thou give strength to the Horse ?
Dost thou clothe his neck with the waving mane ?*
20. *Dost thou make him charge like a locust ?
The snort of his nostrils is terrible !*
21. *He paweth in the plain, and rejoiceth in his strength,
He rusheth forth to confront the weapons ;*
22. *He laugheth at fear and is never dismayed,
And he recoileth not from the sword ;*
23. *The arrows rattle against him,
The glittering spear and the javelin ;*
24. *With a bound, and a rush, he drinketh up the ground ;
He cannot contain himself at the blast of the trumpet ;*
25. *At every blast he crieth, " Ha, ha ! "
He scenteth the battle from afar,
The thunder of the captains and the shouting.*
26. *Doth the Hawk fly by thy cunning,
And stretch its wings towards the south ?*

27. *Doth the Eagle soar aloft at thy command
 And build his eyrie on high?*
28. *He alighteth on the crag,
 And lodgeth on the tooth and keep of the cliff;*
29. *Thence he espieth the prey,
 His eyes behold it from afar:*
30. *Even his young ones gorge the blood,
 And where the slain are there is he.*

CHAP. XL. *Moreover Jehovah answered Job and said:*

2. *Is he who contended with the Almighty corrected?
 Let him who disputed with God reply.*
3. *Then Job answered Jehovah and said:*
4. *Lo, I am weak! What can I reply to Thee?
 I lay my hand on my mouth.*
5. *Once have I spoken . . . but I will not speak again;
 Twice . . . but I will add no more.*

Chapter xxxviii. Verse 2.—"O, that the Almighty would answer me!" Job had exclaimed (Chap. xxxi. 35); and now the Almighty does answer him, but not with an "indictment." Instead of "telling God the very number of his steps," he is called to forget himself and his own petty claims in a close, sincere, and admiring study of those "ways" which all "men do sing" even when they "contemplate them from afar." The reproach of this opening sentence is instantly followed by a self-manifestation of the God whom he had so long desired to behold, in the light of which he sees how utterly he had misjudged his Maker, and obscured the Divine "counsel," purpose, scheme, by his inadequate conceptions of it.

Verse 3.—When challenging the Divine Justice Job had said (Chap. xiii. 22): "Do Thou accuse me, and I will answer; or let me speak, and do Thou respond." And now that God challenges *him*, He bids him gird up his loins like a man and answer, not an accusation, but a series of interrogations which feelingly persuade him of the labyrinth of interwoven mysteries amid which man gropes his way; interrogations which, as Humboldt has said, "the natural philosophy of the present day may frame more scientifically, but cannot satisfactorily solve."

In Verses 4-15, verses constructed according to the strictest laws of Hebrew poetry, the mysteries of *earth*, *sea*, and *light* are set forth in strophes each consisting of four sentences and eight members.

Verses 4-7 deal with the mysterious origin of the Earth. And, here, Jehovah is represented as taking very much the line and tone of thought with which Eliphaz had opened the Second Colloquy (Chap. xv. 7). There is an obvious similarity between his demand of Job—

Wast thou born first, O man,
And wast thou brought forth before the hills?

and Jehovah's—

Where wast thou when I founded the earth?

There is the same irony in both, the same intention of reducing Job to silence by convicting him of ignorance and presumption, although the one demand simply irritates him, while the other, which yet is not another, melts and subdues him. It is not difficult, however, to account for this difference of effect; for who does not know that it is the Speaker who stands behind the words that gives our words their several and varying force, and that the same vein of irony must produce very different effects on different lips? Eliphaz had sarcastically rebuked Job for assuming that the secret of the universe was with him, as though he had played the spy on the Divine Cabinet at which the creation of the world was mooted and had thus "engrossed wisdom to himself," quite unconscious that in thus rebuking Job *he* was assuming a superior wisdom—assuming that he himself was really familiar with the secret of which Job, despite his exclusive pretensions, was wholly ignorant. And how could such an assumption fail to irritate one who was fully aware that what the Friends knew that he knew also? But the same rebuke from the mouth of the Creator of the universe, of the only wise God who had presided over the Cabinet, and said: "Let us create the heavens and the earth, and let us make man in our own image, after our likeness,"—how should this irritate even the wisest of men or fail to humble his pride of knowledge?

In *Verse 5* the prevalence of order, rule, law in the creation of the world is emphatically recognized by the words "measures" and "line;" while the architectural figure implied in these words also serves to introduce the more pronounced image of *Verse 6*, in which the metaphor of the Builder becomes explicit, and the Maker of all is portrayed as an Architect, bearing line and measure, who, having sunk the foundations of the earth, proceeds to lay its corner-stone.

It is a curious instance of the perverse inconsistency of traditional habits of thought that one of our ablest Commentators, after a frank recognition of the metaphor of these Verses, goes on to take them literally, sees in "the foundations" of *Verse 6* "the lower strata on which the earth's surface rests," and finds in the expression a singularly accurate anticipation "of facts but lately disclosed by science;" while in *Verse 7* he discovers, in like manner, a proof that "the stars were in existence before the earth assumed its actual shape." When shall we learn that to treat a Sacred Poem as if it were a scientific treatise, and to extract an accurate cosmogony from the very metaphors of the Bible, is a perilous and fatal course, if we do not learn it when studying a Poem which probably contains as many metaphors at variance with the scientific conceptions of the present age as of those which are in harmony with it?

What the Poet is thinking of in *Verse 7* is not scientific facts but the mystic connection everywhere assumed in Holy Writ between "stars" and "angels," and of that strange sympathy between heaven and earth in virtue of which we are affected by all the motions of the celestial sphere, while they in heaven are tremulously sensitive to all that passes on earth. As we meditate on the Verse we are far more suitably engaged in drinking in its beauty than in pressing it into the service of a science which is not in any of its thoughts; or in illustrating it from other literatures which shew that the mystical conceptions it embalms are not peculiar to any race or time; as, for example, the familiar passage from Shakespeare¹ which no repetition can stale:

¹ *Merchant of Venice*, Act V., Scene 1.

Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold :
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubim :

and in which, not only the connection of stars with angels is reproduced, and the music which heaven pipes to the dancing earth, but even that metaphor of a building which dominates Verses 5 and 6. Nor should we fail to note the exquisite propriety of the epithet which sets "the stars of the *morning*" to sing in the morning of the new-made world. What the Poet would have us find in his words is beyond the reach of mere Science—the Divine Builder of the universe rearing this mighty and beautiful home for the children whom He was about to call into being ; and the angelic hosts, the armies of the skies, rushing forth from heaven so soon as its cornerstone was laid, to gaze, admire, and hymn his praise with songs and choral symphonies and shouts of joy.

Verses 8–11 deal with the no less mysterious origin of the Sea, and are but a magnificent paraphrase of the creative fiat (Genesis i. 9) : "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together into one place." Breaking forth from the chaotic earth, like some gigantic and portentous birth, swaddled in mists and with clouds for its garments, the mighty ocean, which no man hath tamed or can tame, was shut in and confined within its rocky barriers by the hand of God. Lawless as it seems, it is under law to Him. In its wildest and most furious moods it does but execute his decree ; nor in its maddest rage can it overstep the bounds He has appointed for it. In language which has deeply impressed itself on the imagination of man, we are taught to recognize even in the heaving and irresistible sea the reign of order and of law. Job's fine descant on the works and wonders of God (Chap. xxvi.), in which he trampled on Bildad's musty proverbs and shallow assumptions of superior wisdom, seems to have been much in the Poet's thoughts throughout the present Chapter ; and in these Verses, especially in Verse 11—a Verse as often quoted perhaps as any in the whole Book—we have an echo of Job's saying (Chap. xxvi. 12) :

By his power He agitates the sea,
And He is of skill to smite its pride.

The transition from the Sea to the origin of Light (Verses 12-15) is very natural, since to the ancients it seemed, as indeed it still *seems* to us, that the sun rose out of the lap of the deep: and here, in images still more striking though less familiar, the Poet sets forth the moral and physical effects of the Dawn: (1) the discomfiture of the wicked; and (2) the revelation of form and colour. How deeply and habitually he had been moved by the first of these effects we may infer, as from his frequent allusions to it, so also from the detailed description elaborated in Chapter xxiv. 13-17. Now, as he once more recurs to it, his imagination stirs and works, and he sees (*Verse 13*) the bright Dawn gradually extending its strong arms till it can seize the great earth-carpet by its extremities, and "shake the wicked out of it"—the light, which they hate and fear, and in which these bats of darkness cannot see, driving them to their dens. The physical effects of the dawn of day are set forth, under two different figures, in *Verse 14*; the Poet here, as elsewhere, preferring a broken metaphor to a maimed and crippled thought. First, he compares the revelation of *form* on the dark or shapeless earth, which we owe to the light of returning day, to the clear-cut impress made by a signet on the fine prepared clay which the ancients used in lieu of wax. And then he compares the revelation of *colour*, the rich embroidery of various hues which we owe to the same source, to the clothing of its naked body with bright and gay attire. Even in *Verse 15*, in which he endeavours to state the moral of these fine metaphors in plain unvarnished terms, his quickened and raised imagination still works in and through his words, and he cannot tell us that the darkness, which is the light in which the wicked walk and labour and rejoice, is withdrawn from them by the pure increasing splendours of the day, without painting this defeat of bold and insolent depravity in a figure of quite classical beauty, and shewing us how the uplifted arm of Violence is broken by the swift stroke of Dawn.

In Verses 16-21 the mysteries which encompass all our knowledge, and which we sometimes foolishly permit to poison

all our knowledge, still engage the Poet's mind. His thoughts still circle round "the cosmical phenomena"—round sea and land, light and darkness; and still he maintains the tone of ironical challenge which he has taken throughout. "Hast thou"—it is demanded of Job, the implication being of course that he has *not*—"descended to the springs of the sea, or traversed the recesses of the deep?" And, again (*Verse 17*): "Hast thou entered into the gates of death, or so much as seen the very portals of Hades?" And here, doubtless, Job would be reminded of his own confession (*Chap. xxvi. 5, 6*) that the Shades tremble so often as the Divine glance penetrates the waters that roll above their gloomy habitation, and that to Jehovah Hades itself lies bare, and there is no covering to Abaddon; while *we* cannot fail to be reminded of the immense labour and straining effort by which Job had risen to and grasped the hope that, beyond the sea of death, there might be a land of light in which he would find a vindication and a home (*Cf. Chap. xvii.*). And still the inexorable demand goes on (*Verses 18 and 19*): "Hast thou comprehended the whole breadth of the earth, so that thou altogether knowest it and all that it contains? Or may there not be even in the province of Divine activity with which thou art most familiar that which lies beyond thy reach? Thou hast spoken learnedly (*Chap. xxvi. 10*) of the 'bound where light toucheth darkness,' and hast loftily rebuked (*Chap. xxiv. 13*) those who rebel against the light, who know nothing of its way, and will not abide in its paths; but dost thou thyself know the path whether to the abode of light or to the crypt of darkness?"

In *Verses 20 and 21* the irony which pervades the whole of this Remonstrance mounts to a climax and breaks through all disguise of metaphor, all bounds of reserve, that it may pierce Job to the heart, cutting sheer through all his assumptions of wisdom, and feelingly persuade him of his ignorance and of his weakness. The *Verses* need no comment; it is enough to cite them: for who can listen to such words as these and not catch the laugh in them, the mocking deference, the kindly but penetrating scorn?

Doubtless thou didst lead it [the light] to its place,
And art acquainted with the path to its abode!

Thou knowest it, for thou wast then born,
And vast is the number of thy days !

Dull men are to be met who resent the attribution of irony to the Maker of us all, very mainly, I suspect, because it is the weapon which wounds them most keenly, because it cuts their solemn assumptions of wisdom and dignity and self-approval to the very quick, because they have, and feel that they have, no defence against it; and there are good men who shrink from it as irreverent or overbold. But surely no honest man, however dull, however reverent he may be, can deny that here, in the Bible itself, irony is attributed to Jehovah; and that He is even represented as turning it against the just man in whose integrity He took a pride—wounding him with it indeed, but wounding only that He might heal.

From this point onward, though the Poet still busies himself with “cosmical phenomena,” he gives his thoughts a wider range, his main thesis still being, however, that in their ultimate causes, as in many of their uses and effects, these phenomena are inscrutable to man; and this is a position which the more we know we are the less likely to impugn. Modern Philosophy, indeed, maintains, as if it were a discovery of its own, that only phenomena are or can be known to man, *noumena* being beyond his apprehension; while modern Science, at least in the persons of some of its representatives, goes a long step farther, and insists that, since final causes are beyond our grasp, there can be none; thus making “man the measure of all things” in a sense very strange and grotesque.

In Verses 22–30 there is little to detain us. The secrets of snow and hail, of the distribution of light and wind, of rain and lightning, dew and ice, are demanded of the man who had assumed to judge and censure the ways of God mainly because he could not comprehend them, and demanded with an overwhelming rapidity and force which leave but little scope for touches whether of graphic description or of moral reflection. Yet such touches are to be found, although the questions which convince Job of his ignorance and presumption move with a swiftness and a heat which are well-nigh bewildering. The inimical, or apparently inimical, functions of many of the great forces of Nature are glanced at in *Verses* 22 and 23.

Their teleological aspects are touched upon in *Verses* 26 and 27, where the beneficent action of rainstorms on the unpeopled desert and the tenantless steppe is indicated, no less than its more obviously benignant ministry on the farms and pastures to which men owe their bread. While in *Verses* 25 and 30 we have graphic descriptive touches not unworthy of our Poet in "the channel cleft for the rain torrent" as it streams down through the riven atmosphere, and the "track" laid down by the Divine Wisdom and Care for the fierce lightning flash; and, again, in the "waters hardened into stone" by the cold irresistible hand of the frost, which compels even the fluid and heaving surface of the deep to "cohere."

There is more to detain us in *Verses* 31–38, though even here I may economize time and space by referring the reader to the brief dissertation given under Chapter iii. Verse 8, for an account of the occult astrological "influences" attributed by the ancients—as also indeed by a vast majority of the moderns¹—to the stars; and of the physical and spiritual truths imbedded in that inveterate superstition. These influences are doubtless glanced at by the Poet in the *Verses* before us, though it is not these mainly which are now in his thoughts. The context, both before and after, shews that it was rather the stars regarded as part of the inscrutable order of Nature which now occupied his mind, and their obvious physical action on the earth rather than their occult and supernatural influence.

"The Cluster" of *Verse* 31 is, of course, the constellation known to us as the Pleiades, and "the Giant," Orion. And if the first meaning of the question be: "Canst thou bind together the several jewels of the celestial Cluster, so that the Pleiads shall be grouped or strung together as in a girdle or a

¹ The most remarkable modern instance of the inveteracy of this superstition is perhaps to be found in the fact, that Professor Stanley Jevons is capable of arguing, and of pressing the most recent discoveries of astronomical and statistical science into an argument, for "a close and intimate connection between commercial crises and the spots upon the sun;" as if the great lord of day were but an omnipotent Bear upon the Stock Exchange! May we not soon hope to hear, from some other gifted scientist, that the sun is making "a good thing" out of his speculations, and getting very "warm"?

brooch; or canst thou unbind and displace the stars which compose the belt or chain of Orion, so that the Giant shall be freed from his bands?" yet we can hardly doubt that, in its second and deeper meaning, it refers to that happy change, or ascent, from winter into spring, on the recurrence of which the beauty and fruitfulness of the earth depend. To the Arabs the bright cluster of the Pleiads, rising before the Sun in the East, announced the approach of the vernal season; while Orion, the most conspicuous object in their winter sky, sank out of sight. The full and main import of the question probably is, therefore: "Canst thou bring back the gracious fruitful warmth of Spring, and release the frozen earth from Winter's sterile bands?"

"The Constellations" of *Verse 32* seem to be the signs of the Zodiac—this at least is the interpretation put on "*Mazzaroth*" by many of our best Commentators¹—which indicate and announce all the changes in "the sweet procession of the year." And the three stars in the Bear, known to us as the "horses" of Charles's Wain, were called in the Orient "the *daughters* of the Bier," or funeral Wain, and were said to be following the corpse of their father, slain by *Gedi*, the pole-star. The succession of the celestial signs, "led forth each in its season," would mark the entire circuit of the year, as would also the varying positions of the Wain in its annual revolution round the Pole. The former would be the recognized index of the seasons, while the latter would also mark, as on a dial, the progress of the night. So that the full force of the

¹ But Canon Cook makes a suggestion which deserves the consideration of those who are able to appreciate it. According to the authorities which he quotes in a Note to this Verse, *Mas-ra-ti*, "the course or march of the Sun-god," is the Egyptian name for "the Milky Way;" and *al-majarah* the Arabian name; while there prevailed among the ancients a tradition that the Milky Way was a former path of the Sun, its light being but a trace of the glory which the Sun had left behind it; and hence he proposes to render *mazzaroth* by "the Milky Way." The arguments in favour of this interpretation are (1) the correspondence between the Egyptian *masrati* and the Hebrew *mazzaroth*; (2) that many traces of the Egyptian language, habits, and traditions are undoubtedly to be found in this Poem; and (3) that it would be remarkable if no reference were made to a celestial phenomenon so striking as the Milky Way by a Poet who was evidently an attentive watcher of the skies, while yet there is none if we may not find it here.

question would be: "Canst thou command the changeful seasons of the year, leading them in each in its turn, with their rich and several blessings for mankind?"

Verse 33.—On the supposed and real "influences" of the heavenly bodies on the world and on the affairs of men—an allusion to which we here meet once more—and the strange persistence of astrological superstitions as illustrated by our own great poet, I have already spoken in the comment on Chapter iii. 8.

In *Verses 34–38* the Poet recurs to the agencies of rain and storm in order still more deeply to impress upon us the feebleness of man and the inscrutable mysteries involved even in the forces with which he is most familiar. The Verses are full of graphic and picturesque touches which, while they shew the most careful and imaginative observation of the facts of Nature, owe much of their power to the naïve and childlike spirit with which he regarded them. As the centurion in the Gospels conceived of Jesus, so he conceives of Jehovah, as holding all the forces of Nature and all the ministries of Life in his immediate control; as bidding them go and they go, come and they come, do this or that and they do it. Of this ministerial function of the most dazzling and tremendous natural forces we have a splendid example in *Verse 35*, where we are taught to think of Jehovah as saying "Go" to the very lightnings, and they go; "Come," and they reply, "We are here!" While we have a capital instance of his terse graphic rendering of an imaginative conception of natural phenomena in his inquiry (*Verse 37*): "Who can *slant* the bottles of heaven?"—i.e., tip up the clouds so that they discharge their contents on the earth; and of his careful observation of them in his description (*Verse 38*) of "the dust caking into mire," and of "clod being glued to clod," when an abundance of water falls upon them.

It is profoundly interesting and instructive to compare with the graphic and sublime utterances of our Poet in this Chapter a passage from the sacred book of the Persians (*Yasna* xlv. 3), in which, from the same position, precisely the same line of thought is pursued, though it is pitched in a much lower key:

"I ask Thee, tell me the truth, O Ahura! who was from the beginning the Father of the pure creatures? Who has made a path for the sun, and for the stars? Who (but Thou) makest the moon to increase and to decrease? That, O Mazda, and other things I wish to know!

"I ask Thee, tell me the truth, O Ahura! who holds up the earth, and the clouds, that they do not fall? Who holds the sea, and the trees? Who has given swiftness to the winds, and the clouds? Who is the Creator of the good spirit?

"I ask Thee, tell me the truth, O Ahura! who has made the kindly light, and the darkness? Who has made the kindly sleep, and the awaking? And who has made him who ponders on the measures of thy laws?"

With the closing Verses of Chapter xxxviii. there begins a graphic series of individual portraits, which has long attracted and held the admiration of the most competent judges of art in this kind. From the great inanimate forces of Nature and their elementary play the Poet descends or "condescends"—if it be not rather an ascent—to the various species of the animal world, lovingly touching on their characteristic "points," instincts, habits, their beauty and grace and strength; and shewing us, as it were, God once more reviewing the creatures He had made and finding them "very good." It was while referring to this series of graphic and picturesque portraits that Carlyle said of this poem: "So *true* every way; true eyesight and vision for all things; material things no less than spiritual. *Such living likenesses were never since drawn.*" And I well remember the profound and kindling emotion of a sculptor and a painter to whom, many years ago, I read the splendid idealizations of the Wild Ass and the Horse given in Chapter xxxix., and the way in which they raged at themselves for their "idiotic ignorance and neglect" of a fount of inspiration so pure and stimulating.

Yet, it must be confessed that these "likenesses" are ideal rather than actual—as ideal as Shakespeare's delineation of the horse of Adonis, though immeasurably superior even to that admired masterpiece precisely because they are not so real and so technical; it must even be confessed that, at least in the case

of the Hippopotamus and the Crocodile, they so far excel any incarnate example of these species as to look well-nigh fabulous. But we must remember both that it is the very function of the Poet to see, and to help us to see, the ideal in the actual, to give us forms freed from their accidental limitations ; and that, as Ruskin insists, the ideal, so far from being opposed to or different from the true, is in fact the perfection of it ; that, in short, to cite his very words, "The ideal is the utmost degree of beauty of which the species is capable." Just as he argues that "the Apollo is not a *false* representation of man but the most perfect representation of all that is essential and constant in man, free from the accidents and evils which corrupt the truth of his nature ;" so we may argue that in these noble delineations of Bison and Ostrich, Horse and Eagle, Behemoth and Leviathan, our Poet is but giving us that which is essential to these several creatures in its most perfect form apart from the limitations and defects to be found in every individual embodiment of them ; that by his very calling of Poet he was bound to give us these ideals ; and that in these he has given us the very truest likenesses that could possibly be painted.

This noble gallery opens, very modestly, with mere sketches of the Lion and the Raven (*Verses* 39-41) ; and probably these sketches are placed in the forefront of the series for the very reason for which the Psalmist (Psalms civ. 21, 22 ; cxlvii. 9), and our Lord Himself (St. Luke xii. 24), afterwards alluded to the ravens and the lions ; viz., to convey the hint that man is of more value than beasts of prey and carrion birds ; and that He who feeds them, "yea, providently caters for the sparrow," is not likely to forget *him* or fail to be "comfort to his age."

In *Chapter xxxix.* we have more elaborate studies, are permitted indeed to gaze on some of the inspired Artist's most finished masterpieces. I shall not be so foolish, however, or so presumptuous, as to make any attempt to reproduce them in words ; they are best seen in their own light : and all that the Commentator can do for them, unless indeed he be as true and great a Poet as the Artist himself, is to explain obscure terms or to put his readers in remembrance, so far as

may be necessary, of the facts on which these descriptions are based.

In *Verses* 1-4 we have a picture of the wild Rock-Goat—*Ibices* as naturalists call them, *yeelim*, or “climbers,” they are called here. They are very shy, and inhabit “exclusively the more desolate and rocky parts of the country.” But as a full description of them, and of most of the “pure creatures” mentioned in this Chapter, is to be found in so accessible and reliable a book as Canon Tristram’s “Natural History of the Bible,” let me once for all refer the student to its pages. The only points which call for notice here are, I think, these. In *Verse* 2 the verb “number” is used in the sense of “fixing the number,” and might be translated “Canst thou *determine*,” &c. And in *Verse* 3 the striking phrase, “And cast out their *throes*,” strange as it looks, has many parallels: Euripides (*Ion*, 45) uses precisely the same phrase; and in a similar connection infants are called “pangs” by Arab poets.

Verses 5-8 contain the famous description of the Wild-Ass, and breathe the very spirit of freedom. In *Verse* 5 the Hebrew gives two names for it; the first denoting speed, and the second—which I have rendered “the Wanderer”—its roving and unbreakable spirit. All wild animals who “feed on that which is green” love to lick salt. Hence the allusion in *Verse* 6 to “the *salt* waste:” the wild ass would naturally seek those gorges and plateaus of the desert, or the steppe, where salt was to be found. The main emphasis of the Poet is laid on the most characteristic features of this beautiful creature; its intractable temper, its disdain of man, its wide and incessant quest of the food it loves. Tristram says that he saw “a wild ass in the oasis of Souf, which had been snared when a colt; but though it had been kept for three years in confinement, it was as untractable as when first caught, biting and kicking furiously at every one who approached it.” As he does *not* give any description of its appearance, I may add that it is reported to have an arched neck, slender and graceful legs, a silver coat with broad patches of bay on thigh and shoulder, a dark-crested mane prolonged in a dark stripe to the tuft of the tail; and to possess a speed beyond that of the fleetest horse.

The *Récém* of Verses 9–12 has occasioned no little speculation and controversy. “Our translators have unfortunately adopted the rendering of the Septuagint, the ‘one-horned’ for *recém*, which is no fabled monster, but a two-horned reality, a beast which once roamed freely through the forests of Palestine, but is now extinct.” Of this “ox of yore,” the Aueroch—corrupted into *urus* by the Romans—an ox “scarcely less than an elephant in size” and of prodigious strength, with immense horns, and of an untameable ferocity and pride, a full description will be found in *Tristram*. Cæsar saw and hunted it. Its nearest extant representative is the bison (*Bos urus*) which still lingers in the forests of Lithuania and the Caucasus, though the fate of the Aueroch (*Bos primigenius*) is fast overtaking it, and in all probability it will soon be no more seen. The tone of irony, which is often laid aside in these graphic sketches—the Poet being too much occupied with the beauty and strength of the creatures he depicts to maintain it—is very pronounced in these Verses; and once more we hear the laugh of Jehovah as He challenges Job to harness the *recém* to his wains, and set it to draw home the produce of his fields.

Verses 13–18.—The Ostrich resembles the stork in its stilt-like structure, in the colours of its plumage—both have black and white feathers in pinion and tail—and in its gregarious habit; but lacks its pious, maternal *storgé*. In virtue of this *storgé*, from which indeed it is said to have derived its name, the Greeks and the Romans used the stork as a symbol of parental love. For its lack, or supposed lack, of care for its eggs and young, the Arabs call the Ostrich, “Wicked Bird.” They have many proverbs built on their close observation of the Ostrich, and in three of these we may find our best illustrations of the Verses before us. The first runs, “More stupid than an ostrich”; the second, “Swifter than an ostrich;” while a third compares the man who is harsh at home but compliant with strangers to the bird “who abandons her own eggs, but hatches strange ones.” The immense speed of the ostrich may be inferred from the fact that, when fully “extended,” she covers twenty-four feet at a stride. But see *Tristram*.

Verses 19–25.—As might have been expected in an Arabian poem, the description of the Horse, with its heroic beauty and

its impetuous lust of battle, is by far the grandest of all these animal "pieces." Probably there is no finer description of this noble creature in the whole range of literature, nor even any worthy to be compared with it as a whole, although in other ancient authors we meet with occasional touches resembling those employed here. *Æschylus* (*Septem*, 375), for example, describes the horse as "impatiently awaiting the blast of the trumpet" (*Comp. Verses* 24, 25); *Pliny* (viii. 42) has "presagiunt pugnam;" and *Virgil* (*Æn.* v. 316), "corripiunt spatia," and (*Georg.* iii. 83):

. . . Tum, si qua sonum procul arma dedere,
Stare loco nescit, micat auribus, et tremit artus.

Verse 26.—The Hebrew *Netz* includes, besides the Hawk proper, all the smaller raptorial birds; and among them *Tinnunculus alaudarius*, our own familiar Kestrel, which is very common throughout Syria. As this is "the only bird which the eagles appear to permit to live in close proximity to them," it may be that it is the Kestrel which is here intended, since here, as in Nature, we find it "in close proximity" to the *Nesher*, or Eagle.

Verses 27–30.—As this first gallery opens with a sketch of the king of beasts, so, appropriately enough, it closes with a picture of the king of birds, which is not unworthy of a place beside any, even the chief, of the master-pieces which have gone before it.

Suddenly the vessel let down to Job, "like a great sheet lowered by ropes at its four corners, wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts and fowls of the air," is withdrawn, and from the cloud of the Divine Presence there issues the challenge (*Chapter* xl, *Verses* 1 and 2): "Is he who contended with the Almighty corrected? Let him who disputed with God reply." The challenge might be even more severely, and not less faithfully, rendered: "Is the *censurer* of the Almighty corrected? Let him that *criticised* God reply." And Job, who already sees in part what the Divine intention is, responds with an exclamation (*Verses* 3 and 4) of which it is difficult to give a satisfactory translation. "Behold, I am

vile!" conveys too much, and, "Lo, I am *weak!*" too little. What he means is that he is too *small*, too *light*, too insignificant and feeble to contend with God, too unwise and unready to answer Him adequately, or even to put into words all that he has in his heart to say. Therefore he "lays his hand on his mouth" to keep it closed, forces and compels himself to silence, though he has still somewhat to urge "an if he would," could he but give his thoughts words and run the hazard of speaking amiss. But that he no longer dares to do. Once, twice, an impulse had risen within him, prompting him to suggest some plea in his own defence or to indicate difficulties which, to his mind, were still unresolved. But he will no longer venture to criticise, much less censure, ways which he feels to be too wonderful for him, dark only through their very excess of light. Long since he had begged (Chap. xiii. 20–22) that, should God deign to enter into controversy with him, He would lay aside his majesty, lest, terrified and overwhelmed, he should be unable to answer Him a word. But so far from conceding that request, Jehovah has appeared to him arrayed in the full panoply of his glory, with pitiless and yet most pitiful severity abating no jot of his state, thus making Job more and more deeply conscious of his own insignificance and temerity, and of his inability to answer his Divine Adversary "one in a thousand." Hence all that he can do is to confess that, as compared with his Antagonist, he is but as dust on a balance, and to hint that he is being surprised, dazzled, overwhelmed, rather than answered and convinced.

He has yet to learn—or, at least, he has not yet fully learned—that no logical and conclusive answer can be given, even by Jehovah Himself, to the questions of the inquisitive and sceptical intellect; or that no such answer can be rendered in terms which the intellect of man, while under its present conditions, can grasp: that, when all has been said which can be said, much must still be left to reverence, to faith, to love. Our "intellectual part" is but a part of our being, not the whole. And when we demand a simply intellectual solution of the mystery of the universe, we demand that which God would not indeed grudge to give us, but which we cannot take. It is not, as some divines have put it, that He resents

our "desire to be wise above that which is written;" for doubtless He would have us wise to the farthest limit of our power: but that when we ask to have the secret of the universe, and of his government of the universe, put into our hand, we ask more than our hand can grasp, more than our intellect, while working under its present limitations, is able to receive; more, too, than it would be good, even if it were possible, for us to have while our moral nature, which is of even greater moment than our intellectual part, is so imperfect, and needs the very training which only faith, only the ventures of a reverent and affectionate trust, can supply.

To know God is one thing; to know all about God, all that He knows of Himself and of all things, is another. And, happily, we may know God, and so know as to trust and love Him, without knowing all that He is and all that He knows. And when once we really know *Him*, we shall learn the enormous insolence of the demand we are so often tempted to make; viz., that the key to the whole course and aim of his Providence should be placed in our feeble and unready hands. This was the lesson Job had still to learn, and for the learning of which that deeper consciousness of his own "smallness," "lightness," "weakness,"—in one word, his own "limitations"—which we have heard him confess, was the best and inevitable preparation.

SECOND DIVINE REMONSTRANCE.

CHAPTERS XL. 6—XLII. 6.

How to know God without knowing all that He is and does, how to stay himself on a Being whose ways are past finding out, is the lesson Job has still to learn. And he learns this lesson in the most singular but approved way—learns it by being shewn that even when God reveals Himself to man, man cannot comprehend Him, nay, cannot so much as comprehend any one of the works, or acts, in which He manifests Himself.

The mystery which Modern Science recognizes in the more subtle and recondite forces of Nature—in Energy, in Life, in Consciousness—was recognized by ancient thought in its more obvious, its more magnificent and impressive, phenomena. But the mystery is the same wherever we find it. We may push back the dark line, or wall, at which our knowledge ends a little further; but, at the best, we soon reach it, and it is as impassable to us as to the world's grey fathers. There is not a single term we use, however simple and common, of which we can grasp all that it covers and connotes. Our wisest word veils more than it reveals. The more we know the more humbly we confess that we know nothing as it is in itself; our very wisdom, our very reverence, makes agnostics of us, and compels us to admit that every item in the whole range of our knowledge floats unsteadily on a great deep of mystery impenetrable. How, then, can we affect to know Him who *is*, of whom the whole universe with all that it contains, and the whole course of human history with all its changes, are but partial and imperfect manifestations?

Comprehend Him we cannot; but we may know Him, and know Him on precisely the same terms on which we know anything of the universe around us, or of our fellow-men. We do know much of the natural world, so much that, save in an idle play of fancy and speculation, we never doubt its existence, although every item of our knowledge soon runs up into mysteries we cannot fathom. And we know much of men, or of some men, although we frankly admit that we do not know even the man we know best *altogether*, much less interpret all that our neighbours are and do. While we confess that in their being and history there are profound mysteries which we shall never resolve, we nevertheless know that they *are*, and there are at least some of them whom we may reasonably and confidently honour and trust and love. As we know them, so also we may know God—know that He *is*; know that He reveals Himself to those who seek Him; know that He is worthy of our reverence, our trust, our supreme affection. The mystery which shrouds Him from us need not hide Him from us any more than the mysteries of our own being need hide us from ourselves, or our incapacity to know all that is in men

need hinder us from knowing them at all, or from committing ourselves to those who have shewn themselves worthy of our confidence and love. As many as care to know Him may find Him, as they find their fellows, in his works, his acts, his words.

It is to these revelations of Himself that He appeals—referring Job to them, referring us to them. In his Second Remonstrance Jehovah follows the very line of argument we have traced in the First. As yet the argument, or appeal, had not produced its due and full effect. It had rendered Job more sensible of his weakness, indeed, of his inability to comprehend all the ways of God, of his presumption in assuming to criticise and censure them. But, even when it is closed, he hints, as we have seen, that he is being overwhelmed by the majesty of God rather than receiving a reply to his doubts and fears. In fine, he has not yet learned his lesson. He is not sufficiently conscious of the limitations of his powers; he is not fully alive to his inability to grasp the mystery by which he is perplexed, or any adequate solution of it; nor is he, as yet, humbled to the very dust by the conviction of his own irreverence and insolence in presuming to censure a Providence he does not and cannot understand.

To this self-knowledge, since there is no other exit from his misery, he must be brought. And hence, in the Second Remonstrance, Jehovah does but iterate the appeal of the First, seeking by this benign iteration to drive him to a conclusion he ought already to have reached. Once more, therefore, He challenges the man who has impugned his justice to yield, if he can, those cosmical forces, the play and incidence of which enter so largely into the Providence he had impugned (Chap. xl. 7-14); and once more He invites him to consider the works (Chap. xl. 15—xli. 34) in which he saw the most marvellous exhibitions of the Divine Wisdom and Power: that he may thus come to know his own weakness more fully, and be more fully persuaded of the majesty and the beneficence of Him whose ways he had ventured to criticise and even to “condemn.”

And, at last (Chap. xlii. 1-6), Job catches the Divine intention, responds to the Divine appeal; he confesses that he

had known neither himself nor God, repents of his insolent attempt to clear himself by condemning his Maker, to assert his own integrity by impugning the righteousness of the original Source and Fountain of Righteousness, falls in utter submission before the great Adversary in whom he now finds, as he had long hoped to find, his Redeemer and Friend; and in and through that submission rises to his true triumph and reward.

CHAPTERS XL. 6—XLII. 6.

CHAP. XL. *Then Jehovah answered Job out of the tempest and said :*

7. *Gird up thy loins, now, like a man ;
 I will question thee, and answer thou Me.*
8. *Wouldest thou also impugn my justice ?
 Wouldest thou condemn Me to clear thyself ?*
9. *Hast thou, then, an arm like God,
 Or canst thou thunder with a voice like his ?*
10. *Deck thyself, now, with pomp and majesty,
 And array thyself in glory and splendour ;*
11. *Pour forth the floods of thy wrath,
 Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low ;*
12. *Look on every one that is proud, and fell him,
 And trample down the wicked in their place ;*
13. *Hide them altogether in the dust,
 Bind fast their faces with darkness :*
14. *Then even I will acknowledge
 That thine own right hand can help thee !*
15. *Behold, now, Behemoth, whom I have made no less than theo,
 He feedeth on herbage like the ox :*
16. *Lo, now, his strength is in his loins,
 And his might in the muscles of his flanks ;*
17. *He bendeth his tail like a cedar ;
 The sinews of his thighs interlace :*
18. *His bones are strong tubes of brass,
 Bars of iron are his ribs,*
19. *Of the works of God he is the masterpiece ;
 He that made him hath given him a scythe :*
20. *The mountains also yield him pasture,
 Where all the beasts of the fields disport themselves :*
21. *He coucheth under the lotus-bushes,
 In the covert of reed and bulrush ;*

22. *The lotus-bushes cover him with their shade,
The willows of the stream hang round him.*
23. *Lo, he flieth not when the river is in spate,
He is fearless though a Jordan burst on his mouth !*
24. *Can one catch him when he is on the watch,
And pass cords through his nostrils ?*

CHAP. XLI. *Canst thou draw out Leviathan with a hook,
Or with a line which thou canst sink into his tongue ?*

2. *Canst thou pass a rush-rope through his nostrils,
Or pierce his jaw with a hook ?*
3. *Will he multiply supplications unto thee ?
Will he greet thee with soft words ?*
4. *Will he strike a bargain with thee
That thou mayest take him to be thy servant for ever ?*
5. *Canst thou play with him as with a bird,
And tie him to a string for thy damsels ?*
6. *Do the Fish-Guild traffic with him ?
Do they distribute him among the merchants ?*
7. *Canst thou fill his hide with darts,
Or his head with fish-spears ?*
8. *Lift thine hand against him,
Thou wilt not again bethink thee of battle !*
9. *See how thine hope is belied !
Is he cast down at the sight of thee ?*
10. *None is so bold as to rouse him up :
Who, then, can stand before Me !*
11. *To whom am I indebted that I should repay him ?
Under the whole heaven all is mine.*
12. *Of his limbs I will not be silent,
Nor of his bruited strength and comely armature ;*
13. *Who hath laid bare the surface of his coat ?
Who can enter his two-fold row of teeth ?*
14. *Who hath set open the doors of his face ?
Round about his teeth is terror !*
15. *The strong shielding scales are his pride,
Soldered together as with a close seal ;*
16. *Each joineth on to each
So that not a breath can come between them ;*
17. *Each is joined to its fellow,
They cleave together and cannot be sundered.*
18. *His snortings cause a light to shine,
And his eyes are like the eyes of the morning ;*
19. *Out of his mouth go flames,*

- Sparks of fire leap out ;
 20. From his nostrils cometh forth smoke
 As of a cauldron on burning reeds ;
 21. His breath would kindle coals,
 And flame issueth from his mouth :
 22. On his neck dwelleth Strength,
 And Horror danceth before him ;
 23. The laps of his flesh cleave together,
 Firm, immovable upon him :
 24. His heart is hard like a stone,
 Yea, hard as the nether mill-stone.
 25. When he rouseth himself heroes tremble,
 They are beside themselves with terror.
 26. Let one attack him with sword,—it will not avail,
 Nor spear, nor javelin, nor dart ;
 27. He reckoneth iron as straw,
 Brass as rotten wood ;
 28. The arrow cannot put him to flight,
 To him sling-stones are as chaff ;
 29. The club is accounted as stubble,
 And he laughs at the shaking of the spear.
 30. His belly is armed as with the sharp points of sherds,
 He stretcheth out a threshing-sledge on the mire ;
 31. He causeth the deep to boil like a cauldron,
 He maketh the sea like an ointment-kettle ;
 32. Behind him he leaveth a glistening track,
 One would take the deep to be hoary !
 33. There is not his like upon earth :
 Created devoid of fear,
 34. He disdaineth all the lofty,
 He is king over all the sons of pride.

CHAP. XLII. Then Job answered Jehovah and said :

2. I know that Thou canst do all things,
 And that nothing is too hard for Thee.
 3. [Thou saidst,] " Who is he that darkeneth counsel without
 knowledge ? "
 Yea, I have spoken of that which I understood not,
 Of things too wonderful for me, which I know not.
 4. [When I said,] " Hear me, and I will speak,
 I will ask of Thee, and hear Thou me,"
 5. I had heard of Thee with the hearing of the ear,
 But now mine eye hath seen Thee :
 6. Wherefore I retract, and repent
 In dust and ashes.

Chapter xl. Verse 7.—The challenge of Chapter xxxviii. Verse 3, is here repeated in identical terms, as if to warn us that the very line of remonstrance and appeal taken in the first section of the Theophany is still to be carried on. But, in *Verse 8*, the real sin of Job—if not, so far as we know him, his only sin—is more directly and severely denounced than in any words we have heard as yet, whether from the lips of God or man. For the real sin of Job, a sin for which his only excuse is to be found in his misery and his incorrigible honesty, was that he claimed his righteousness *as his own*; and that, in order to maintain his own righteousness, he had dared to call in question the righteousness of God, condemning Him to clear himself. His ignorance, his desperation, his stubborn loyalty to facts, his determination not to say more than he could see, and to speak out all that was in his heart, might palliate and account for his offence; but nothing could justify it. For Jehovah could only be tried by his peers: and where was *his* peer to be found? In his criticisms and censures of the Divine Providence Job had assumed that, had he been in the place of the Almighty, he would have ruled the world more wisely and justly, would have shewn a more invariable and equitable favour to the good, and have smitten the evil with a swifter and more exact retribution for their crimes. But how could he tell what he would have done had all power in heaven and on earth been committed to him, had he known all men, all events, and all their causes and issues? The ignorance, which made him bold and overbold, should have made him diffident and self-distrustful; the weakness, which rendered him the prey of passionate and uncontrolled excitement, should have constrained him to reverence and awe: the very integrity of which he was conscious, and somewhat too conscious, since this too was the gift of God, should have assured him that the Giver of it must be just. Only a fellow of the Lord of Hosts, his equal in wisdom, in power, in goodness, could possibly judge Him aright. Had Job, then, any pretension to be his fellow and peer? Had he an arm like his (*Verse 9*)? Let him, if only in imagination and for a moment, climb the seat of Supreme Authority, and don the vestures, woven of light, worn by the King of kings; let him

mount the chariot of the sun and fling the bolts of retribution on the wicked and the proud (*Verses 10-14*), and mark what would ensue before he ventures to arraign the justice of Jehovah, or to assume that his rule lacked wisdom or equity. If he is content with the results of that usurpation, then, indeed, even Jehovah Himself will defer to him, and acknowledge the might of his hand ; but if he shrink from the mere thought of so vast and bold an adventure, how is it that he does not shrink from sitting in judgment on the Almighty and even condemning Him ?

At the very lowest, he who claims to be wiser than God, and of a more perfect equity, even if he shrink from climbing to the seat of the Heavenly Majesty, should be prepared to prove his claims by deeds comparable with those which command his admiration and the admiration of the world. He who arraigns the Ruler of men, can he so much as rule the beasts that perish ? He who challenges the Lord and Creator of the Universe, can he so much as rival any one of his creative masterpieces ? *This* seems to be the ruling and informing thought of the *Verses* that follow in Chapters xl. and xli. To deepen Job's sense of his presumption and injustice Jehovah once more calls him to study and consider the marvels of the natural world. As even in the creatures with which he was most familiar—as, for example, the Goat, the Bison, the Ass, the Lion, the Raven, the Hawk, the Ostrich, the Eagle—so also in those which were most strange and wonderful to him—as Behemoth and Leviathan—he would find proofs of a creative skill and providential goodness, before which even he, the critic and censor of the Almighty Maker, could only stand humbled and abashed.

On the two pictures which he now proceeds to elaborate, the inspired Artist evidently lavishes his utmost skill. He regards them—he might well regard them—as his masterpieces, even as he also regarded the creatures whom he paints as the masterpieces of their Maker's skill in the animal world (Chap. xl. 19 ; xli. 33). And if his delineation of the Hippopotamus and the Crocodile—mainly because these creatures are not so attractive to us in themselves—do not move us to

the same admiration we feel for the Verses in which he depicts the Eagle and the Horse, we can nevertheless understand how profoundly they would impress the men of his own generation, who had heard strange incredible rumours of these monstrous denizens of the Nile, but had never seen them, and had never even met with any graphic and vital description of them. It is easy for us to fancy a Hebrew of Solomon's time sitting under his vine or fig-tree, with this Poem in his hand, rapt in astonishment as he read the glowing Verses which brought these powerful and monstrous forms before him for the first time, and enabled, or even compelled, him to see them as they lived, couching under the lotus-bushes of the Nile or rushing through its sealike stream.

Tristram has them both in his Natural History; and therefore I need only give a few brief exegetical notes.

Verses 15-24.—The Hebrew word *Behemoth* means simply "the beast," *i.e.*, the beast *par excellence*. Many of the elder Commentators supposed that in these Verses we had an ideal description of "the typical great beast," an abstract and brief chronicle which combined the more notable features of several species, such as the elephant, the aueroch, and even the mammoth, with other extinct pachyderms. But since the time of Bochart most of the Commentators are agreed that, though the Poet may be describing a type or ideal, he has the Hippopotamus alone in his eye; that, if we have an ideal here, it is the ideal *Pihemont*, as the Egyptians call this "ox of the water." And, beyond a doubt, this large beast answers sufficiently to every detail of his description. For the hippopotamus does "feed on grass like the ox;" he is strictly herbivorous, "and makes sad havoc among the rice fields and cultivated grounds when at night he issues forth from the reedy fens."¹ His mouth is enormously large and shovel-shaped, so that it can grasp a vast quantity of food in a single bite. His appetite is immense, and his formidable tusks are so modified in shape that he "can eat the grass as neatly as if it were mown by a scythe"² (*Verse 19*). Though a denizen of the water, the hippopotamus feeds on land, climbing the high grounds adjoining the river in which he

¹ Tristram.

² Wood.

has his haunt; "the mountains also yield him pasture" (*Verse* 20). Lichtenstein, in his *Travels in South Africa*, says that "the natives take advantage of this habit by placing sharp-pointed stakes in his path, which pierce him as he descends." But his home is in the water, under the shady covert of the overhanging banks, or among the reeds and water-plants of the marshes. That "he coucheth under the lotus-bushes, in the covert of reed and bulrush" (*Verse* 21) is confirmed by the Egyptian monuments, in which he is often depicted as lying among the tall reeds and lotuses of the Nile.

Verse 23 contains a phrase of some difficulty: "He is fearless though a *Jordan* burst on his mouth." If we are to retain the word "*Jordan*," we must take it as a common noun, applied to every river with a fierce and tumultuous current, and subject, like the Palestinian river, to a sudden and heavy rise in the volume of its waters. But an allusion to the river of Palestine is so foreign to the whole tone of the Poem, which has no specifically Hebrew allusions in it, and moreover it is so out of place in this clause of the Poem, the hippopotamus not being a denizen of the Jordan, that there is much weight in a conjectural emendation of the text which proposes to read "*Jor*" (an Egyptian name for the Nile, or one of its branches) instead of "*Jordan*," and assumes that this, the original word, may have been altered by an early copyist to whom *Jor* was an unknown term.

Chapter xli. Verses 1-34.—Beyond a doubt "*Leviathan*" (*livyathan*) was the common Hebrew name for the Crocodile, although in one passage, Psalm civ. 26, it appears to denote one of the great cetaceans which "played" in the Mediterranean Sea. In the opening Verses of the Chapter, and especially in *Verse* 5, there may be, though probably there is not, a covert allusion to the fact that, at least in the district of Egypt in which the Crocodile was worshipped, even this ferocious and unconquerable reptile had been caught and tamed. Herodotus (Book ii. chap. 69) says: "The crocodile is esteemed sacred by some of the Egyptians, by others he is treated as an enemy. Those who live near Thebes, and those who dwell around Lake Mœris, regard them with especial veneration. In each

of these places they keep one crocodile in particular, who is taught to be tame and tractable. They adorn his ears with earrings of crystal or of gold, and put bracelets on his fore-paws, giving him daily a set portion of bread with a certain number of victims: and, after having thus treated him with the greatest possible attention while alive, they embalm him when he dies and bury him in a sacred repository." But the keen, almost contemptuous irony of the passage forbids us, I think, to see any allusion to this Egyptian custom. Indeed I do not quite understand by what process an allusion to the taming of the Crocodile has been extracted from a description of its untameable ferocity and pride.

In *Verse* 6, on the other hand, there is an unquestionable reference to an Egyptian custom in the words "Do the Fish Guilds (literally, "the Companions" or "the Confederates") traffic with (or "in") him? do they distribute him among the merchants?" For in ancient Egypt, as in many Eastern lands, "guilds" were as common and as influential as they were in Europe during the Middle Ages. The word for "merchants" is "Canaanites," *i.e.*, Phœnicians—the Phœnicians being the great trading community of Solomon's time.

The impenetrable hide of the Crocodile, referred to or described in *Verses* 7, 15–17, 26–29, is one of his most remarkable features. His whole head, back, and tail are covered with horny quadrangular plates, or scales, set so closely together that the sharpest spear can seldom find its way through them, and even a rifle ball glances off them if it strike obliquely.

Another characteristic feature is noted in *Verses* 13 and 14. "The Crocodile has a single row of teeth in each jaw, implanted in sockets, from which they are reproduced when lost or broken."¹ The teeth are all made for snatching and tearing, but not for masticating, the Crocodile swallowing its prey entire when possible; and when the animal is too large to be eaten entire, the reptile tears it to pieces, and swallows the fragments without attempting to masticate them.² It has no lips to hide its formidable jaws. "*Round about his teeth is terror!*"

¹ Tristram.

² Wood.

Verses 18–21 describe the Crocodile as he emerges from the water, violently emitting the long-repressed and heated breath; the thick vapour, glistening in the sun, looks like the smoke and flame of burning reeds or coals. Bertram, in his *Travels in North and South Carolina*, says: “I perceived a crocodile rush from a small lake, whose banks were covered with reeds. It puffed out its enormous body, and reared its tail in the air. *Thick smoke* came with a thundering sound from his nostrils. At the same time an immense rival rose from the deep on the opposite bank. They darted one at another, and *the water boiled* beneath them.” The last phrase is a capital illustration of Verses 31 and 32.

The “threshing-sledge” of Verse 30 is of course *the tail* of the Crocodile. And this is his most formidable weapon, at least on shore. It is “one mass of muscle and sinew.” Sweeping it from side to side, this heavy unwieldy-looking reptile *sculls* himself through the water at a rate well-nigh incredible. Modern Egyptians affirm that with a single blow of its tail it can break all four legs of an ox or a horse.

Shakespeare’s allusion¹ to this “king over all the sons of pride” is quite in the spirit of “Job.”

We may as bootless spend our vain commands
Upon the enraged soldiers in their spoil
As send precepts to the leviathan
To come ashore.

Chapter xlii.—At last Job has learned his lesson. He has learned that he is incompetent to sit in judgment on Jehovah, since he who cannot comprehend any one of the “wonders” of God must, of necessity, be unable to comprehend the Doer of them all. He has learned that even his integrity is not his own in any sense which entitles him to be proud of it, or to take his stand upon it against God, but is rather the result and outcome of God’s grace working inwardly and secretly on his offspring, the Divine image shining up through human infirmities, limitations, defilements. This, indeed, is a truth of which he had caught some glimpses before Jehovah spake to him out of the tempest; for as often as he had confessed

¹ Henry V. Act iii. Scene 3.

(*Cf.* Chap. xxviii. 28 ; xxxi. 14, 23) the fear of the Lord to be the beginning of wisdom, the root and guarantee of all righteousness, he had virtually acknowledged that he owed his very integrity to Heaven. But the truth he had virtually acknowledged had logical consequences of which he was not fully and practically aware, or which he had not inwardly and strongly felt. It is only now, when he has seen God for himself, that the sense of his own weakness, folly, temerity, presumption comes home to him, and he is so ashamed of having dared to contend with the Giver of all good, and the Lord of all power and might, that, as he recalls the Divine challenge (*Verse 3* ; comp. Chap. xxxviii. 2), "Who is this that darkeneth counsel with words devoid of wisdom?" he frankly confesses that, in questioning the Providence which shapes the ends of men, he had intermeddled with things too high and wonderful for him, and leaped perilously and foolhardily into the great darkness which bounds all human knowledge. Nay, more ; as he remembers (*Verse 4*) how, strong in the consciousness of his own integrity and madened by misery, he had ventured to arraign and even to condemn the Almighty, he is overwhelmed by a conviction of his own *guilt* as well as of his weakness ; and not only confesses that

Merit lives from man to man,
And not from man, O Lord, to Thee !

but also acknowledges that up to this moment he had never truly known either God or himself, or had known Him only by hearsay, and not with the piercing insight of faith. Now that he sees himself in his true proportions, and has at least some inkling of the Majesty and Grace which, after having filled and overflowed the narrow compass of man's mind, swells out in boundless tides of glory infinitely beyond it, he is amazed at his own presumption in having assumed to measure them by any poor faculty he can call his own : he is cut to the very heart by a sense of his transgression ; he humbly and wholly retracts all his questions, criticisms, charges, censures, doubts, and flings himself before God in utter penitence and self-abasement—repenting "in dust and

ashes" like one bowed down by deep and inconsolable grief (*Verses 5 and 6*).

But when Job thus humbles himself under the mighty hand of Him with whom he had so long striven, but striven only that he might constrain Him to tell him his Name and to win a blessing from Him, we should greatly err were we to collect from his shame and contrition that he at length "renounces his integrity," and admits that he had incurred his misery by heinous and wanton sins, such as those of which he had been suspected by the Friends. The transgression which he really confesses and renounces was committed *after* he had lost all that he had, and consisted in his misinterpretation of his misery. His transgression was, indeed, the immediate offspring, if not of his piety, yet of his theology. Holding, with the Friends, that suffering had no other cause than sin, and no other end than punishment, when God afflicted him he took the affliction as "a *de facto* accusation" of sin. Persuaded that he had not so sinned as to provoke the judgments which fell upon him, he resented them—resenting still more hotly the accusation he read in them; and charged God foolishly, since God, so far from accusing him of sin or punishing him for it, was even then boasting of him as a just man and perfect, and was but purging and refining him that He might raise him to a higher and more ample perfection.

Before Job could regain peace, therefore, he must be convinced that he had misjudged God, that he had misinterpreted the end and purpose of the Lord concerning him. And how could he be more feelingly persuaded of his error than by being taught his necessary and inevitable incapacity to judge God aright, to grasp and comprehend his works and ways—much more Himself—or to read his purposes in his acts? It was to convince him of this incapacity that he was catechized as we have heard him catechized throughout the Theophany, the keen edge of the Divine irony pressing every question more closely home. He who was fain to penetrate the very arcana of the universe is, as it were, sent back to the alphabet of the phenomenal world, to the "*abecedarium naturæ*:" and as he stumbles over his alphabet it is demanded of him, with a

humour as loving as it was keen, how he, who cannot spell out his very letters, the mere rudiments of the simplest and most universal Revelation, can pretend to comprehend the ways of God with man—the sum and crown of his works—and with a whole world of men, in the lot and fate of each of whom there were mysteries as profound, as insoluble, as those which darkened his own? How, in especial, could he hope to penetrate the great mystery which has most of all perplexed the thoughtful and good of every age—the mystery of pain, of loss, of grief, of evil?

This, I take it, was the line of argument, all charged with emotion, along which Job's mind was led, and by which Jehovah broke down the obstinate questioning attitude of his spirit, and made him so conscious of his guilt as well as of his weakness as virtually to exclaim:

The best of what we do and are,
Just God, forgive!

It was this which, by inducing penitence, restored faith, rekindled love, quickened a new heart in him, like the heart of a little child, and made him a new man.

SECTION IX.

THE EPILOGUE.

CHAPTER XLII. 7-17.

A MODERN poet would probably, a Christian poet would certainly, have given a more inward and spiritual *dénouement* to the story of Job than that contained in the Verses before us. But even the man of genius cannot be before his age at all points: and we must not expect modern or Christian ideas of the greatest poet of the ancient world, much less of a poet who wrought under the conditions of Hebrew thought and inspiration. Even in the legend of Prometheus, though it be—at least as handled by Æschylus—the most fascinating that we owe to classical antiquity, and profoundly tinged by the spirit which pervades the Christian revelation, the triumph of the Sufferer consists simply in his release from his agonies and his restoration to his original and august conditions, enhanced, perhaps, by a consciousness of the immense benefaction he had conferred on the feeble race of man. And, for reasons which even yet we have not wholly mastered, though some of them are obvious enough, it was the will of God that only glimpses, only partial and occasional previsions, of life and immortality should be vouchsafed to the prophetic soul of Israel, musing on things to come. Hence our Poet, though he knew, even as it is our happiness to know, that

There is a Height higher than mortal thought;
There is a Love warmer than mortal love;
There is a Life which taketh not its hues
From earth or earthly things, and so grows pure
And higher than the petty cares of men,
And is a blessed life and glorified,

nevertheless brings his story to what may fairly seem to us a somewhat tame, if not impotent, conclusion : and we have constant need, as we study this Epilogue, to bear in mind the limitations under which he was compelled to work.

The general thought he had to express in these Verses, the consolatory promise he was commissioned to carry to as many as would suffer and be strong, was that which Shakespeare has thrown into the tender fanciful lines :

The liquid drops that you have shed
Shall come again, transform'd to orient pearl,
Advantaging their loss with interest
Of ten times double gain of happiness.

But this consolatory thought and promise had to be expressed, if at least he was to bring it home to the heart of his time, under the "forms of mentation" common to his time. Glimpses of a higher, and even of the highest and most Christian, solution of the mystery he has already given us, in that he has shewn us a man who could be true to his convictions even when he could gain no reward thereby; true to his God even when God seemed to abandon, afflict, and mock him without a cause : a man whom even the unmerited unprovoked anger of the Almighty drove only to larger thoughts of Him, and a more inward and hearty affiance upon Him ; a man who plunged, by the worst wrongs of time, into the very depths of despair, could spring up out of them to grasp a life beyond the reach of time. These were Job's true gains, his true compensations ; in these lay his true victory. But these were not gains that could be thrown into concrete forms and made plain and attractive to Hebrew eyes. For them there must be an outward, as well as an inward, gain and victory. The triumph of Job, which was also the triumph of God, must have its "ovation ;" that is, it must be clothed in forms which would touch the popular imagination and bring it home to the popular heart. They must see the good man released from his undeserved sufferings, rewarded with "ten times double gain of happiness," loaded with the very blessings which they and their fathers had been taught to regard as "the portion" of the good. If they were to learn patience

from his patience, and a brave endurance of hardness, he must ride through their midst, bringing his "spoils" with him

All this the Poet enabled them to see and learn by the brief Epilogue which he now appends to his sublime Poem. *We* may feel it to be the least satisfactory part of his work ; but to *them* it would be the most satisfactory, animating, and inspiriting ; and even inspired men, if they are to serve their own generation, must speak to it in a language it can understand. Nor need we, should this formal *dénouement* of the story seem to us pitched in too low a key, either part with the higher solution of the great problem of human suffering and its issues which we have gathered from the main body of the Poem, or too conclusively turn away from the solution suggested by the Epilogue. For here, too, there lies under the mere form and letter a thought which can hardly fail to be welcome to us. Much as in certain moods we are tempted to long for a better country, even a heavenly, nevertheless this present world is our home, and has long been our home. We love it for its beauty, and for our innumerable associations with it, even when we are most impatient of it. We crave to see it brought under the law, into the freedom, of righteousness, with all its sin and misery clean swept out of it : we look forward with strong desire to the advent of a time when its inhabitants being wholly redeemed from evil, its sighs and groans shall be hushed, its earnest expectation fulfilled, and the world, so long made subject to vanity and corruption, shall rise into the glorious liberty it is to share with us. And in this Epilogue we have a clear intimation that our hope for the world is one day to become a fair and sacred reality. For Job is a representative of suffering humanity. As he was restored to the happy days when the Almighty "kept" him, when the lamp of the Divine favour shone brightly and steadfastly upon him, and the very stones of the field were at peace with him ; so also we are to see a day when the happiness and peace vouchsafed to him are to be vouchsafed to the whole race, when the long agony and travail of the creation shall be accomplished, and there shall come forth a new heaven and a new earth in which only righteousness and peace will dwell.

CHAPTER XLII.

(7.) *And it came to pass that, after the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My anger is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends, because ye have not spoken of me aright, like my servant Job.* (8.) *Therefore, now, take to you seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer them up as an offering on your behalf; and Job my servant shall intercede for you; for I will surely accept him, and not deal out to you according to your impiety: for ye have not spoken of me aright, like my servant Job.* (9.) *Then Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuchite, and Zophar the Naamathite, went and did as the Lord bade them; (10) and the Lord accepted Job; and the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he interceded for his friends: and the Lord gave to Job twice as much as he had before.*

(11.) *Then came to him all his brothers, and all his sisters, and all who had known him aforetime, and ate bread with him in his house; and condoled with him, and comforted him, for all the evil which the Lord had brought upon him. And they every one gave him a kesitah, and every one a gold ring.* (12.) *Thus the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-asses.* (13.) *He had also seven sons, and three daughters; (14.) and he called the name of the first Jemima, and the name of the second Cassia, and the name of the third Keren-happuch: (15.) and in all the land were no women so fair as the daughters of Job. And their father gave them an inheritance among their brethren.* (16.) *After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years, and beheld his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations.*

(17.) *So Job died, old and full of days.*

Chapter xlii. Verse 7.—Even in the First Colloquy Job had detected a certain base courtier tone in the apologies of the Friends, and had warned them (Chap. xiii. 7–11) both that they were speaking wrongfully for God, and that He would “heavily rebuke” them for saying what they thought would be welcome to Him rather than what they knew to be true. And now his prevision is verified. No sooner has Jehovah reconciled Job to Himself than He turns on the Friends with the rebuke: “Mine anger is kindled against you, for ye have not spoken of me aright, like my servant Job.” But had not Job spoken wrongfully of God? Yes, often; but he had not spoken wrongfully *for* God. He had

criticised, censured, condemned whatever seemed unjust in the ways of God with men, not stopping to consider whether he were competent to judge, whether he understood the ways he condemned ; and for this " presumptuous sin " he had been punished and corrected, his heaviest punishment being the misery which his own suspicions and misconceptions had caused him ; but he had never belied his honest convictions. It was his very fidelity to his convictions which had led him to charge God foolishly. He had dared to believe (Chap. xvi. 21) that, if God had wronged him, He would " right a man even *against* Himself, and a son of man against a fellow " of the Lord of hosts. And in this he had thought rightly of God, and spoken rightly ; while the Friends had thought wrongly and spoken wrongly. If Job had condemned God to clear himself (Chap. xl. 8), they had condemned Job to clear God ; and whereas he had spoken sincerely, they had paltered with their conscience and forced themselves to believe that Job must have sinned rather than admit that there was more in the moral government of God than their theology had dreamed of.

For this sin an atonement must be made. The atonement demanded of them is (*Verse* 8) that they should recognize and confess their sin ; that they should humble themselves before the very man whom they had condemned as a sinner above all men, and beg him to intercede for them with the God whom they seem to have regarded as their property rather than their Lord, whom they certainly regarded as with and for them and against him. It was a terrible downfall, a bitter but wholesome humiliation, for men who were so familiar with all the secrets of Heaven ; and one hardly knows with what face Zophar, who had reviled Job so loudly and harshly, could urge such a prayer as this upon him.

There is a fine stroke in *Verse* 10 ; for here the Penitent brings forth fruit meet for repentance. Job had been forgiven his trespass against God, the proof of his forgiveness being that God had convicted him of his sin ; and now he forgives those who had trespassed against him, and proves his forgiveness by interceding on their behalf. And the Poet marks this moment of magnanimity and forgiveness as at once the crown,

climax, and consummation of his virtue, and the turning-point in his career. It was *when*, if not because, Job prayed for his unfriendly Friends that God delivered him from his captivity to loss and pain and shame. His flesh came back to him like that of a little child, and a new day of grace and favour dawned upon him.

It is as we study the final paragraph of the Epilogue that we most need to remember the conditions under which the Poet worked. No doubt, as I have admitted, a modern Christian poet would have carried the story to a different close. *He* would have felt that the gifts of Fortune were but a sorry compensation for a tried and perfected virtue like that of Job: that it would be but a poor comfort to him to be fawned upon once more by the kinsfolk and acquaintance who had abandoned him in the long day of his destitution and misery; and that the children born to him in the years of his recovered prosperity could not in any way "make up" to him for the children he had lost. And hence *he* would probably have translated Job, so soon as his love and trust were restored, to that ampler and serener world of which he had caught some glimpses in the dark night of his sorrow, and which men so seldom see till they can see nothing else. But such a close, however natural and satisfactory it might be to us, would have been unnatural, unsatisfactory, dispiriting to the men whether of Job's day or of Solomon's. And so, for their teaching and encouragement, the inspired Hebrew Poet submits to the limitations of his age; he abandons the higher *dénouement* which he himself probably was perfectly capable of grasping—as we may infer from the hints scattered through the Poem proper—and carries his story to a conclusion such as his own generation was able to receive. He portrays him as receiving "double" for all his losses (*Verses* 10, 12); as submitting to the caresses of his brothers, sisters, and all who had known him aforetime, although they had stood aloof from him while the hand of God was heavy upon him (*Comp. Verse* 11 with *Chap. xix. 13-19*); and as having seven sons and three daughters born to him, to replace the ten children of whom he had been bereaved (*Verse* 13).

We need not therefore assume, however, that Job “committed himself” to the kinsfolk and acquaintance, who were as “ready chorus” to the favour as to the apparent anger of the Almighty; and it would be monstrous to suppose that *a father* could be content so that he had children round him, and the same number of children, even if they wore new faces and were called by new names. Job could not forget the goodly sons and daughters whom the Lord had taken from him because it pleased the Lord to give him other sons and daughters as goodly. Even in the ancient world, even in the East—although to many these phrases seem to explain everything, however contrary to nature—a father’s heart was made of more penetrable stuff than that, and could be as fond and constant as if it were beating now. What, for example, could have compensated Abraham for the loss of Isaac, or Isaac for the loss of Esau, although *he* was not the son of the promise? And did not Jacob utterly refuse to be comforted for the loss of Joseph, although many stalwart sons were left to him, and Benjamin, the darling of his old age, was there to take the vacant place? No, we are not to imagine that Job was “past feeling” because he was an Oriental of the antique world; but we are to admit that to the ancient Eastern world, as indeed to the great bulk of the world, both Eastern and Western, to this day, a catastrophe which did not replace suffering Virtue in all opulent and happy conditions would have seemed a sin alike against art and against morality.

Hence it was, I take it, that the Poet surrounded Job, after his trial, with troops of friends, with goodly sons, and daughters so fair that no names could adequately express their charms; and lavished on him droves, and herds, and flocks—all of which, although they were the usual and coveted signs of wealth and enjoyment, must have been but a very little thing to “the man who had been in hell,” and who, even in torment, had lifted up his eyes and seen that, for him at least, heaven was *not* very far off.

The *kesitah* of Verse 11 is commonly taken, as in the Septuagint, to be a silver coin stamped with the figure of a lamb. The simple fact is that no one knows what it was. But the best authorities incline to think that it was not a coin at all,

but a lump, bar, or wedge of silver. Thus Madden, in his learned and elaborate *History of Jewish Coinage*, says: "The real meaning of *kesitah* seems to be 'a portion,' and it is evidently a piece of silver of unknown weight." Whatever it may have been, and whether the "rings" presented with the *kesitahs* were ear-rings or nose-rings, they constituted, I suppose, the *nuzzur*, or present—such as Orientals still make on paying a visit of ceremony—offered to Job by those who had known him aforetime when they came to condole with him and comfort him.

The names of *Verse 14* are, of course, significant. *Jemima*, according to its Arabic derivation, means "dove;" according to its Greek derivation, it means "day." *Cassia* is simply the cassia, or cinnamon, of our commerce, a sweet and fragrant bark. And *Keren-happuch* may be either the Hebrew form of the Greek "cornucopia," or, more probably, "horn of pigment"—the pigment used by Eastern women for enhancing the beauty of their eyes.

These names were given to Job's daughters to denote the excellent beauty of these fair women; and that these dazzling beauties *were* what their names implied we are expressly told in *Verse 15*. Here, too, we are told that their father gave them an equal portion with his sons; and this fact is doubtless noted in order to suggest that his new children lived together on terms as frank and kindly as those which had obtained among the children he had lost.¹

Women so fair and well endowed were not likely to lack husbands. And, in *Verse 16*, it is implied that his sons found wives and his daughters husbands; and that Jehovah vouchsafed both to them and their offspring that "heritage from the Lord" which Orientals most covet.² It was only when Job was "old and full of days" (*Verse 17*), when he was *satisfied*, or even *satiated with life*, only when he had seen his children's children to the fourth generation, that he died—died unto men, to live more truly and more fully unto God.

Here the Story ends—in the Hebrew; but in the Septuagint there is the following significant addition to it: "*It is written that he will rise again with those whom the Lord raiseth*."

¹ See Note on Chap. i. Ver. 4.

² Psalm cxxvii. 3.

a sentence which seems to indicate that even in the ancient Eastern world there were some, if not many, besides the Poet himself, who could appreciate a higher and happier *dénouement* to the tragical history of Job than that contained in the Epilogue. What is the age of the tradition embodied in this sentence it is impossible to say; in all probability it could not have originated till the days of Ezra: but both those who wrote and those who received it must have looked, as we look, for far better things for Job than wealth, children, troops of friends, however frankly they may have admitted that all these were not intended as a compensation for the things he had suffered, nor as a reward for his patient endurance of them, but simply as the outward and visible sign of his complete restoration to the Divine favour and goodwill.

The Problem of this Scripture is one which has engaged the thoughts of many of the most admired poets. Æschylus, Omar Khayyám, Milton, Goethe, Shelley, Byron, and many more, have tried their hands upon it, though only Æschylus, I think, can be said to have carried it to a satisfactory close. His Prometheus steals fire from heaven to comfort the feeble and timid race of men, and will not repent, nor yield to the cruel will of Zeus whatever tortures are inflicted on him: nailed to the rock, with the vulture tearing at his heart, he still glories in his good deed. But Milton's Satan, though equally indomitable and defiant, is resolute only to do ill; and Goethe's Faust, by his vulgar cravings for sensual indulgence, forfeits the respect inspired by his insatiable thirst for knowledge, and has to be forgiven, not justified: while the Prometheus of Shelley, and the Cain of Byron are portrayed as baffled and defeated by a capricious and malignant Power, rather than reconciled to the infinite Love which sits at the centre and shines through the mystery of life. Even Omar,¹ profound as is the admiration inspired by his noble Rubáiyát, disappoints us, and compels us to confess that he gives up the problem instead of solving it, and, in his despair of finding

¹ A very instructive and pathetic essay might be written by any scholar who would be at the pains of comparing the very different treatment of this Problem in the Book of Job and in the Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám.

a law of justice in the tangled lot of man, sinks into moral indifference. Much as we may admire the weight of thought which he compresses into a few words, or even into a single word, the subtle irony of his style, the original and prodigal beauty of his illustrations, who is not moved to very sadness as he reads the verses in which the great Persian—if indeed Omar be not a mask behind which we are to see a modern English face—sums up his “conclusion of the whole matter?”

What! out of senseless Nothing to provoke
A conscious Something to resent the yoke
Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain
Of everlasting penalties if broke!

What! from his helpless Creature be repaid
Pure Gold for what He lent us dross—allay’d—
Sue for a Debt we never did contract,
And cannot answer—Oh the sorry trade!

Oh Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin
Beset the road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with predestin’d Evil round
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!

Oh Thou, who man of baser Earth didst make,
And e’en with Paradise devise the Snake;
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blackened, Man’s forgiveness give, and *take*!

It is an unspeakable relief to turn from all these sceptical solutions of the mystery of life, which yet are no solutions, to the story of Job, which, as it moves in a higher plane of thought, so also it offers us a true and adequate solution of the mystery. For here, too, “the same great spectacle of heroic endurance is set before us;” and Job, like Omar, like Prometheus, is the representative of humanity. A man of like passions with ourselves, he suffers as we suffer, and breaks his heart on the very problems we are all compelled to confront, and passes victoriously through the very agony which every reflective and religious spirit is called to undergo. To him, as to us, it was long inexplicable why the best efforts of man are baffled, and his purest happiness is marred, by pain, loss, change, sin; and how He who made us what we are, and rules

the whole process of our life, can nevertheless be just. But at last he learned that, though we cannot hope to comprehend the ways of an infinite and eternal God—so long at least as we are involved in the trammels of time and sense—we may nevertheless, and reasonably, trust in the Lord and do good without fear; since, to the good, suffering is a discipline of perfection, a discipline which, while it even now brings forth in us the peaceable fruit of righteousness, also prepares us to inherit an ampler, fuller, happier life beyond the grave. And whosoever has learned to see in suffering a proof of God's love, and beyond the darkness of death a land of light, in which all wrongs shall be redressed and all virtue meet its due reward—a land, in fine, in which the varied discipline of this world shall issue in a life conformed to its fair and high ideal, and cherished by all happy and auspicious conditions—he has a solution of the great Problem in which he may rest and rejoice.

As we look back, then, on all the way in which we have been led by our great Poet, on Jehovah's appeal to his creative acts and Job's controversy with his Friends, we may well sum up the impressions it has left upon us in the ascription which Blake engraved above the final plate of his noble "Inventions of Job:" "GREAT AND MARVELLOUS ARE THY WORKS, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY; JUST AND TRUE ARE THY WAYS, O THOU KING OF SAINTS."

THE END.